

Alternatives in Development : **Education**

Equality Quality and Quantity

**The elusive triangle
in Indian education**

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The Tagore Memorial Lectures, delivered at the
University of Poona on 23rd, 24th and 25th August 1975.

EQUALITY, QUALITY AND QUANTITY

The Elusive Triangle in Indian Education

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KOTHRUD, PUNE 411 038

First Published 1975

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PREFACE

I am very grateful to the authorities of the Poona University where the substance of this book was delivered as Tagore Memorial Lectures. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. Dabholkar, Vice-Chancellor, Poona University, and Prof. Mangudkar for all their kindness, courtesy and patience.

I would like to clarify that the views expressed in this book are purely personal and do not represent those of the Indian Council of Social Science Research which has sponsored the publication or those of the University of Poona where the lectures were first delivered.

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New Delhi
5 September 1975

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PRINTED IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

THE MAIN OBJECT OF THIS BOOK IS TO EXAMINE THE manner in which the concepts of equality, quality, and quantity have been interpreted and implemented in Indian education, the measure of success achieved in this enterprise so far, and the broad steps that will have to be taken in the years ahead if Indian education has to reflect these values effectively.

The Educational Scene at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Indian society was highly stratified, hierarchical, and inequitable. There was a small group of well-to-do persons at the top consisting of the feudal overlords and their dependents and supporters, the higher castes, cultivators of large tracts of good land, traders, merchants, and moneylenders. The bulk of the people, however, were poor and underprivileged. In spite of the fact that a few women could rise to the highest positions in society, the status of the average woman was very unequal and low. The Scheduled Castes who were treated as untouchables and the Scheduled Tribes who were not integrated into the mainstream of the society formed the lowliest, the poorest, and the most exploited groups.

The educational picture broadly reflected this socio-economic background of inequality. There was no formal school system organized and supported by the state; and the total educational effort consisted of a small formal sector (which included institutions voluntarily organized to meet the limited felt-needs of a very small minority) and a large non-formal sector.¹

The formal sector consisted of institutions of two broad categories. The first included institutions of higher learning (the *pathashalas* of the Hindus or the *madarsahs* of the Muslims)

1. I am using the expression 'non-formal sector' to include all education out-side the formal sector. It, therefore, also includes what is called incidental or informal education.

which were predominantly religious in character. They conferred high social status on their students but not much of a political or economic privilege so that they were mostly availed of by the higher castes or special groups which engaged them-selves in advising on religious and social matters, in studying and interpreting the scriptures, and in interpreting the laws. Their total student enrolment was only a microscopic fraction of the total population. The second category included the institutions of elementary education which taught the three R's. These were far more numerous and were availed of by the middle classes who needed such education, mostly the priests, several categories of public servants, landlords, traders, money-lenders, and the like. But even these were mostly attended by boys and did not enrol more than one or two per cent of the total child population. The aristocracy generally made their own special arrangements for the education of their children and on the whole were not specially distinguished either by their own achievements in learning or by their desire to spread it among the people. It will, thus, be seen that the formal educational system of the period was traditional in character and covered only a very small proportion of the total population (mostly the sons of the upper and the middle classes).

The large masses of the people had no access to the formal schools and were educated only in the non-formal sector. They were socialized in the culture and value-system of the caste or the class to which they belonged by the family itself. They also acquired the vocational education they needed through a non-formal apprenticeship in the family or under a relation or a friend. The girls learnt home-making and child-rearing as well as the vocational skills they needed by assisting their mothers or other elderly women of the family, both before and after marriage and by actual participation. The only liberal education the masses received was again of a non-formal character and consisted mostly of orientation to religion and culture through discourses built round temples, mosques, religious festivals, and ceremonies.

In this system, it was the social status (as determined by caste, political or economic power, sex, or profession) that determined an individual's access to education, as well as its type and extent, rather than *vice versa* and the objective of the system

was not to promote vertical mobility, but to educate individuals to their pre-determined status in society. The educational system also made a distinction between intellectuals who did not work with their hands but received formal education, and workers who produced wealth with the sweat of their brow but were not supposed to need any formal education. Consequently, only a small class which lived a parasitic life had leisure and access to formal education and to the great cultural traditions of the society. On the other hand, the bulk of the people who were the real workers had no leisure and no access either to formal education or to anything beyond the little or popular cultural traditions of the society.

It must be pointed out that there was very little social dissatisfaction with this system in spite of its restrictive and inequitarian character. To begin with, the teachers in the system, who were few and respected for their learning, received such meagre remuneration and lived a life of such simplicity that they did not become objects of envy. Secondly, the privileges which formal education conferred on their students were also limited so that those who were educated therein did not also become objects of jealousy and those who were not admitted to its fold did not get any strong feelings of deprivation. Thirdly, the size of the formal school system was small and the public investment therein was marginal so that neither the teachers nor the students were numerous enough to become a powerful social group. Finally, a belief in a divinely ordained hierarchical society made every one, whether or not admitted to the formal system, accept his lot with quiet resignation.²

The Basic Issues

The modern educational system of India was meant to be an improvement over this traditional system of education from every point of view. It was, therefore, geared, right from the very beginning, to the pursuit of the three major goals of equality, quality, and quantity. The connotations of each of these goals

2. For a detailed account of the indigenous system of education, see Nurullah and Naik, *A Students' History of Education in India (1800-1974)*, Macmillan & Co., New Delhi, 1974, Chapter I.

as well as the relative emphasis placed on them has varied from time to time. But they have always dominated the determination of educational policies and have been simultaneously pursued.

Two important groups of problems arise in this context. The first relates to the extent to which these goals have been realized in actual practice. It is obvious that the simultaneous pursuit of these goals has made the task extremely difficult and that the conflicts inherent in the situation have inevitably come to the surface. For instance, the pursuit of quality has often linked itself with privilege and become inimical to that of quantity; the pursuit of quantity, in its turn, has often led to a deterioration of standards; and the pursuit of equality has been often found to be inimical to that of quality and has been frequently hampered by the very inequalities in society which it was intended to remove. We have tried to reconcile the inevitable conflicts with little result; and we have not yet been able to provide adequately either for equality, or for quality, or for quantity. This raises two important questions: (1) why has this pursuit of really laudable and desirable goals failed in our educational system?; and (2) what measures should be adopted so that this pursuit would succeed in the years ahead? These are very important educational problems which need close examination for diagnostic and remedial purposes.

The second group of problems relates to the wider issue of social transformation through education. Has the pursuit of these goals of equality, quality, and quantity in education made any impact on the social structure and rendered it less stratified and hierarchical or more egalitarian? The answer probably is that the impact of education on the basic features of the social structure has been rather limited. This raises two very important questions : (1) why is it that all our achievements in the spread of education, its qualitative improvement, and the provision of equality of opportunity have produced so small an impact on the society and failed to change its basic character?; and (2) what changes of policy are needed, either in education or outside of it, to promote effectively the long-awaited social changes? Both these problems need close study with a view to evolving alternative strategies of development.

Methodology

In the course of the next three chapters, I have tried to find tentative answers to these problems on the basis of development in Indian education over the past 160 years and in the light of the major trends in educational reconstruction that are now seen in almost all parts of the world. For convenience, the period under study has been divided into two phases. The first phase, designated as the British phase, cover 108 years from 1813 to 1921 when education was transferred to Indian control; and the second phase, designated as the Indian phase, cover 54 years from 1921 to 1975 and has been further divided into two sub-phases – pre-independence (1921-1947) and post-independence (1947-1975). An attempt has then been made to examine how these concepts of equality, quality, and quantity were gradually evolved over these different phases and how they were implemented. It is hoped that this analysis, seen against the background of international educational thought, will help indicate the ultimate direction in which educational reconstruction in India should begin to move and identify the priority programmes that should be developed in the immediate future.



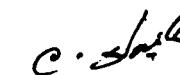
INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

BRINGING OUT THIS SECOND EDITION OF EQUALITY, Quality and Quantity in Indian Education gives us a sense of fulfilment. This book elaborates the substance of the Tagore Memorial lectures delivered by J. P. Naik in the University of Pune, in 1975. It is part and parcel of a project he had launched in the Indian Council of Social Science Research to explore new paths of policy-making and designing programmes of India's development in three crucial sectors : health, education and agriculture. All these sectors called for transformation in an integrated manner. In this publication he argues "Education and development are not two different things but the two sides of the same coin : education as well as provide the tool for it." (P. 50)

As a perceptive planner he says, "Quality should be defined not in narrow middle class terms, but in the interest of the people as a whole. It is recognition of a large variety of competences and the grant of equal status to them that will make "quality" compatible with both "equality" and "quantity" (P. 50). Finally, he has quoted his most favourite recommendation from the report of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66), popularly known as the Kothari Commission after its illustrious chairman Dr. D. S. Kothari :

"Education thus needs and demands, more than anything else, hard work and dedicated service. In particular, it presents a supreme challenge to the student, teachers and educational administrators who are now called upon to create a system of education related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and to maintain it at the highest level of efficiency. It is upon their response to this challenge that the future of the country depends." (P. 127)

These thoughts are as fresh and as inspiring to-day as they were when penned by Naik almost thirty-six years ago. But beneficial thoughts are wasted when they remain simply as the policy level and are not translated into action by the parties for whom they are meant. This has been the tragedy of Indian education.



(Chitra Naik)

CHAPTER ONE

Equality

OF THE THREE MAJOR CONCERNS OF INDIAN EDUCATION which are discussed in this book, the most significant is the attempt to provide equality of educational opportunity. The Indian society, especially the Hindu society, has been extremely inegalitarian, and this is the one value on the basis of which this society can be humanized and strengthened. In fact, the issue is so crucial that the Indian society cannot even hope to survive except on the basis of an egalitarian reorganization.

Equality in Education : British Phase (1813-1921)

Between 1813 and 1921, the British administrators laid the foundations of the modern educational system, mainly for their own colonial and imperialistic purposes, and tried to create a system of education for the upper classes. At the same time, they eliminated some grossly inegalitarian aspects of the traditional educational system. Their contribution to equality in education, therefore, was both positive and negative – more of the latter than of the former.

The principal positive contribution of the British administrators to equality was to give to all citizens open access to educational institutions maintained from or supported by public funds. Three important developments in this regard may be mentioned.

(a) Sanskrit Colleges : The East India Company established some Sanskrit colleges in an attempt to continue the popular traditions of the feudal chiefs whose kingdoms it had annexed. In these institutions, the teachers were all Brahmans and so were the students; and the Brahman teachers refused to admit and teach students from those castes which, according to the Hindu tradition, were denied the right to study the Vedas. The British administrators could not accept this position and insisted that all those who sought admission to the Sanskrit

colleges should be admitted, irrespective of caste and religion, and that the Brahman teachers must either teach all such students or quit the colleges. They were supported in this endeavour by those Brahman teachers who saw the injustice of the traditional taboos. The right of all persons, even the non-Brahmans and the non-Hindus, to study Sanskrit and the sacred texts, thus, came to be recognized.¹

(b) Education of Girls : Next came the question of girls. The schools established by the East India Company were professedly meant for both boys and girls. But in practice, their enrolment consisted of only boys because the tradition to send girls to school did not exist and, afraid of the adverse reactions it might create among the people, the government made no efforts either to enrol girls in the general schools or to establish separate schools for them. The first efforts in this field were, therefore, made by the missionaries and enlightened Indians. Very soon, however, the government abandoned its cautious restraint and, in 1850, Dalhousie directed that the government should establish girls' schools and strive to spread education among girls in all possible ways.² This policy was followed by the successive administrators and was supported by the enlightened leaders of Indian public opinion. The Indian Education Commission (1882) made several important recommendations for the spread of education among girls, and this policy was reiterated in the Government Resolutions on Educational Policy issued in 1904 and 1913.

(C) Education of the Scheduled Castes : Perhaps the worst difficulties were encountered when the problem of educating the 'untouchable' castes came up. The first test case arose in 1856 when a boy from an untouchable caste applied for admission to the government school at Dharwar. He was refused admission on the ground that it would result in the withdrawal of all the caste Hindu children from the school and thus in the closure of the school itself. But the decision was sharply criticised by the Governor-General of India as well as by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, and a clear

1. For details of one such struggle that took place in the Poona Sanskrit College, see Nurullah and Naik, *History of Education in the Province of Bombay* (1885-1955).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

policy was laid down that no untouchable child should be refused admission to a government school, even if it meant the closure of the school.³ In the years that followed, children from the untouchable castes began to get admission to the government schools in slowly increasing numbers, and their right to admission was recognized. But as the British administrators did not make any attempts to abolish untouchability even when the untouchable children were admitted to schools they had to sit away from the other children (they were not even admitted into the school building if it happened to be a temple) and were not touched either by the teachers or by the other students. In spite of these limitations, the ice had been broken and the untouchable castes had been given access to the school system. This was no mean achievement.

The British administrators thus established, firmly and unequivocally, the right of every child, irrespective of caste, sex, or traditional taboos, to seek admission to all schools supported or aided by public funds.

Another contribution of the British administrators to promote equality was the opportunity they provided to the lower strata of the society to move up the social ladder through education. They started, as early as in 1844, to appoint persons educated in the new system to posts under the government. This was done, of course, not so much in the interests of equality as to make the new system popular with the people. But, as it happened, it did provide an important channel of vertical mobility and a large number of educated persons from the lower social classes were able to secure government service and, through it, social status, economic better-ment, and political influence. This was indeed a tremendous advance over the traditional system in which every person was tied to an education and a status determined by his religion, caste, or sex.

Yet another contribution of the British to equality was the special efforts they made to promote education among the backward sections of the community. These efforts were, of course, politically motivated. When they found that the 'advanced' communities were launching agitation against the British rule, they divided the society into 'advanced', 'intermediate'

(which included Muslims), and 'backward' groups and began to pay special attention to the promotion of education among the intermediate and the backward communities on the well-known principle of divide-and-rule. Nonetheless, the fact that these efforts did promote a measure of equality should be accepted and appreciated.

These positive contributions of the British administrators were more than counter-balanced by their emphasis on the education of the upper classes or on the downward filtration theory, by their neglect of the education of the poor people who formed the large majority, by their policy of neutrality in social reform, by the establishment of private independent schools for the well-to-do, and, above all, by the basically inequalitarian structure of the formal educational system they created. It is necessary to discuss these in some detail.

(a) The Downward Filtration Theory : The British administrators desired to create a class or classes of people who would be loyal and grateful to them and would act as interpreters between them and the administered. They, therefore, put forward the *Downward filtration theory* or the idea that culture would filter down from the upper to the lower classes. This enabled them to argue that, even if their efforts were limited only to the education of a class or classes at the top, education would, over time, spread automatically to the lower classes as well. They also argued that the educated upper classes would or should, in their turn, educate the lower classes at a later stage. This theory was obviously good for the imperialistic designs of the British, but it was hardly egalitarian in character.⁴

(b) Neglect of the Education of the Poor People : The neglect of the poor lower classes, who formed the vast majority of the people, followed as a corollary from the downward filtration theory. The British administrators, therefore, never developed programmes of adult education or of liquidation of mass illiteracy or of universal elementary education. All that the government tried to do was to spread elementary education among the people as widely as possible on a voluntary basis. But the extent of the total effort made, even in 1921, was too small to have any effective impact on the problem.

3. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882.

4. Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-102.

(c) Non-interference in Social and Religious Matters :

The British government also professed a policy of neutrality in social and religious matters. But as no education can be value-neutral, this policy implied an unequivocal support to the *status quo* in the inegalitarian, hierarchical, and highly stratified Indian society. Fortunately, the negative effects of this policy were neutralized to some extent by the social reform movements led by enlightened Indians who had assimilated the 'liberal' spirit of the new education.

(d) Independent Schools : The British administrators also organized (and encouraged the organization of) private fee-charging schools which maintained high standards and had a direct link with privilege because they enabled their students who came from the rich families to occupy high posts under the government. This was their attempt to create a counterpart of the Public Schools of England in India. This inegalitarian measure has since taken root and grown to a considerable size so that it defeats all efforts at radical reform.

(e) The Structure of the Formal Educational System : But the worst disservice which the British administration did to the cause of equality was to create a structure for the formal educational system which, on the one hand, gave enormous advantages to the well-to-do upper and middle classes to perpetuate and consolidate their privileges and, on the other, placed the poor classes at equally tremendous disadvantages while availing themselves of the facilities which the system offered. This system, for instance, was based on a *single-point entry* in Class I at about the age of six years, sequential annual promotions from class to class, and *full-time instruction* by *full-time professional teachers*. The well-to-do and the educated castes could appreciate the value of education, and the single-point entry created no problem for them. They could feed, clothe, equip, and send their children to schools on a whole-time basis so that the concept of full-time instruction also did not create any problem. But the poor illiterate people were at a serious disadvantage in the system. They did not adequately appreciate the value of education (and many of them could not even tell correctly the ages of their children), and the chances of a child from the poor families missing the narrow single-point entry to the system at about the age of six were indeed very high; and

whenever a child did miss this chance, he was condemned to live and die an illiterate adult. Secondly, in almost all the poor families, the children were required to work as soon as they were old enough to do something useful. Consequently, even when they were sent to schools at the age of six, they had to be withdrawn as soon as they began to work because the schools provided only full-time instruction. These withdrawals began at about the age of nine and by the age of fourteen, hardly any poor children were left in schools. This model of the formal educational system was also highly competitive because the children of the rich and the well-to-do could survive it and climb to some form or other of privilege while those of the poor people who either did not 'drop into' the system at all or 'dropped out' of it, sooner rather than later, generally suffered the most. In fact, the system merely added an insult to the injury because it converted 'dropping out', which was essentially an economic handicap of the children from poor families, into a measure of their intellectual in-competence, and declared them as inferior to the survivors of the system who did not necessarily have any inherent academic or intellectual superiority. In the absence of political awareness, the masses ignored this insult, internalized their failure, and thought that their exclusion from privilege was due to their own weaknesses and incompetence. The system was also legitimized by the cooption, every now and then, of a few persons from the underprivileged groups who managed to survive within the system and get into the more important positions which were usually monopolized by the children from the well-to-do classes.

While evaluating the contribution of the British administrators to the creation of equality in Indian education or society, therefore, one must not ignore three hard basic facts :

- ↳ the formal educational system created by the British was an instrument of *not* educating, rather than *of* educating the children from the poor families;
- ↳ it was not an instrument of creating an egalitarian society, but an attempt to create new classes, favourable to the new economic and political order, in lieu of the old feudal classes; and
- ↳ it was also an attempt to replace the traditional system which taught Oriental learning through the medium of Sanskrit or

Arabic/Persian by a modern education system which taught European knowledge through the medium of English.

Through this system, the British did succeed in achieving their two major objectives, viz., to create a new class or classes and to transform the traditional educational system into the modern. Their expectations, however, went wrong in two respects. These new classes which they created at such great pains did not remain loyal and grateful to them as anticipated. But, inspired by a new surge of nationalism, they organized a political struggle which eventually resulted in the end of the British rule in India. Secondly, the educated classes had not shown, as was, hoped, any great desire or anxiety to spread education to the poorer classes but had been more concerned with strengthening and perpetuating their own privileged position. This attitude has, unfortunately, become more pronounced after independence.

Equality in Education : Indian Phase (1921-1975)

The Indian leadership which assumed control of education since 1921 made a bolder and a more committed approach to the problem of equality in education and society. By this time, the idea that the educational system should provide equality of educational opportunity and should be used as an instrument of social change had become an integral part of the nationalist thought in India; and the leaders of Indian public opinion were not committed to non-interference in social matters as the British were. The Indian administrators of education, therefore, were not prepared to restrict the connotation of 'equality', as the British administrators had done, merely to a recognition of every citizen's right of access, irrespective of his caste, religion, or sex, to all educational institutions maintained and supported by public funds. They put a much wider connotation on this term and their policies differed from those of the British administrators in several important respects. To begin with, they attached great significance to financial support to students (including the provision of free education or charging of low and subsidized fees) to neutralize the effect of poverty. They also desired to provide universal elementary education to all children, first in the age group 6-10 and then in the age group

6-14. For the same purpose, they also adopted a policy of expanding secondary and higher education on the basis of open-door admissions. They launched vigorous measures to spread education among women and the weaker sections of the community such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Above all, they tried to make direct changes in the society which would help promote equality in education as well. It is necessary to discuss these policies in detail to show how equality of educational opportunity was promoted under Indian control.

FREE EDUCATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT

The British administrators insisted on the levy of fees at all stages of education, partly on the ground that fees would form an important source of revenue for financing education and partly on the ground that the people would not appreciate anything for which they were not required to make a payment. The Indian opinion, on the other hand, was strongly in favour of making education free, especially because of the ancient Indian tradition that one should not 'sell' knowledge. What is even more important, Indians wanted to make a more liberal provision for other forms of positive student support such as free supplies of educational equipment or clothing, provision of free school meals and other health services, hostels, and scholarships, which were not emphasized by the British administrators.

In so far as *free education* is concerned, progress was not easy under the British rule. But since 1947, considerable progress has been made in this regard. For instance, the British view of regarding fees as an important source for financing education is now abandoned. Fees can become the most regressive form of taxation whose incidence falls more heavily on the poor who generally have larger families. The Education Commission, therefore, was right in recommending that the levy of fees should not be looked upon as a source of revenue. This is now the accepted policy.

As fees tend to be an impediment to the spread of education, especially in an overwhelmingly poor country like India, the Commission also recommended that education to the end of Class X should be made free. The attempt of the State governments to adopt the new pattern of 10+2+3 and to make

education free for the ten-year school is, therefore, welcome. As of now, elementary education is free in all parts of the country. Secondary education is free in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan provide free secondary education for girls. Some States such as Maharashtra provide free secondary education for children of persons whose annual income is below a prescribed level. A similar trend is seen in higher education also. In two States – Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir – even higher education is free. Rajasthan provides higher education also free to all girls, and Tamil Nadu does not charge fees at the pre-university stage. It must also be pointed out that, even where fees are levied, there is considerable provision in all parts of the country for free studentships in deserving cases. What is even more important, the general trend in the country is for reduction or abolition of fees, at all stages of education; and any attempt to raise fees is met with strong opposition from the public and agitation by the students.

All these developments are welcome and egalitarian, except perhaps the provision of free education or levy of low fees in higher education. The main reason given for keeping fees low at this stage is to help the poor families and to promote equality. But this does not happen, and as the seats available in colleges and universities are largely monopolized by the well-to-do classes, the levy of low fees only implies a large hidden subsidy to them. This is not egalitarian. There is, therefore, every reason to increase the fees in higher education and to provide liberal free studentships to students coming from poor families.

The problem of reduction in or abolition of tuition fees is only a negative and a very minor aspect of the total student support needed to ensure that poverty does not become a bar to the education of children from poor families and that all talented children coming from poor families have full access to the education they deserve. It is, therefore, right that Indian administrators have been placing much greater emphasis, especially since 1947, on the *provision of other and positive forms of financial support* to students coming from poor families. Among these, the following may be mentioned.

(a) **Elementary Education :** There is now provision in all the States for the supply of free text-books to the needy students.

A provision is also made, though on a limited scale, for the supply of free clothing and free school meals. The provision of school health services is still in its infancy, and beyond a few metropolitan cities, they are almost non-existent.

(b) **Secondary Education :** The secondary stage is probably the weakest from the point of view of other forms of student support. The State governments provide only a limited scholarship support and the only Central schemes at this stage are scholarships for talented students in approved residential schools (these number only a few hundreds) and scholarships for talented children in rural areas (at the rate of two scholarships per community development block).

(c) **Higher Education :** In higher education, however, a good deal of provision is now made for hostels and scholarships. It has been estimated that one student in about every ten can now stay in a hostel. The Government of India also provides, in addition to the scholarships provided by the State governments, charitable agencies, and universities, a large number of national scholarships on the basis of merit and loan scholarships. There is also a scheme of scholarships for talented children of primary and secondary school teachers; and students are sent abroad under a scheme introduced by the Government of India as well as under collaborative schemes initiated with the cooperation of friendly countries. It has been estimated that one out of every six or seven students in higher education does get some form of scholarship support at present, although the amount of scholarship is often inadequate.

(d) **Scheduled Castes and Tribes :** There is one important area in which substantial progress has been made in providing student support especially in the post-independence period, namely, the education of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Facilities of free education have been provided for them in all parts of the country. At the secondary stage, there is considerable provision for hostels and scholarships. At the post-matriculation stage, every student from the Scheduled Castes (subject to a means test) and every student from the Scheduled Tribes are also given a scholarship. The number of these scholarships has increased from 655 in 1947-48 to 3,25,000 in 1973-74. These measures have been of great help in spreading education among the weaker sections of the society. It is true that they have still a long way

to go to be on par with the other communities. But substantial progress has already been made, both in extending educational facilities among these social groups and in providing them with employment under the government.

While one welcomes all that has been done in this sector, it must be pointed out that we still have a long, long way to go if real equality of educational opportunity is to be introduced and poverty is not to be a bar to the education of a child from a poor family. At the elementary stage, we must move in the direction of providing text-books, uniforms, school meals, and at least a minimum of health services, free of charge, for all children. At the secondary stage, we need a much better provision of hostels, scholarships, and assistance to individual students for transport (i.e., for purchase of bicycles) if the access of poor students (who do not have secondary schools at their places of residence) to secondary education is to be increased. At the university stage, we need a far larger provision of scholarships and hostels than we have at present. At all stages of education, the facilities given to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have to be extended to all talented but economically handicapped children, irrespective of caste or religion; and what is even more important, it is necessary to provide the intellectual, academic, and emotional support for which students from deprived backgrounds are starved and which they badly need for their personal development. Above all, it is the responsibility of the state to continually scout for talent and to provide all opportunities for the full development of every talented child. This programme still continues to be largely neglected.

Two important points raised by the Education Commission with regard to the administration of the scholarships programme also deserve emphasis and attention.

(i) The selection for scholarships on the basis of 'merit' alone tends to favour the well-to-do classes whose children do better on conventional tests. The Commission, therefore, recommended that improved tests of 'merit', which would be more objective and culture-free, should be designed and that the selection of students for scholarships should be done on the basis of 'merit' and 'social justice' instead of on merit alone. For instance, it suggested that there should be 'clusters' of schools on the basis of a common socio-economic background

of students and that selection for scholarships should be separate for each cluster. Unfortunately, this problem has received very little attention.

(ii) The Education Commission recommended that the scholarship programme should also be combined with a placement programme and that all scholarship-holders should be placed in selected good schools. This was a basically good suggestion which ought to have been adopted, with modifications if necessary. But unfortunately, it has also been largely ignored so far.

UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The British administrators refused to accept the principle of compulsory elementary education. The Indian nationalist thought, however, was firmly of the view that the provision of equality of educational opportunity must include a certain minimum general education to be provided to all children on a free and compulsory basis. A demand that four years of compulsory education (which would ensure effective literacy) should be provided to all children was put forward, for the first time, before the Indian Education Commission by the Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji, in 1881. The proposal was again taken up by Gopal Krishna Gokhale who moved a resolution on the subject in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1910 and a bill in 1912, neither of which achieved their objective. The public demand for compulsory primary education continued, however, to grow, and between 1918 and 1931 compulsory education laws were passed for most parts of the country by the newly elected State legislatures in which Indians were in a majority. In 1937, Mahatma Gandhi put forward his scheme of Basic Education under which education of seven or eight years' duration was to be provided for all children and its content was to be revolutionized by building it round a socially useful productive craft. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi actually defined the content of Basic Education as equivalent to matriculation *minus* English *plus* craft. As a result of all these efforts, the idea that it was the duty of the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children till they reached the age of 14 years was nationally accepted as an important aspect of

the overall effort to provide equality of educational opportunity. Under the wise leadership of Sir John Sargent, the then Educational Adviser to the Government of India, these ideas were accepted by the British administrators and the *Post-War plan of Educational Development in India (1944)*, known popularly as the Sargent Plan, put forward proposals to provide free and compulsory basic education to all children in the age group 6-14 over a period of 40 years (1944-1984). The nationalist opinion did not accept this long period, and a committee under the chairmanship of B.G. Kher proposed that this goal could and should be achieved in a period of 16 years (1944-1960). It was this recommendation that was eventually incorporated in the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy (Art. 45). Unfortunately, this is the one major educational reform which remains unimplemented even to this day. The complete story of this failure, along with a discussion of its causes and the remedial action involved, has been narrated in an earlier publication *Elementary Education in India : A Promise to Keep*. It is, therefore, not necessary to repeat that narrative in this book. Our purpose would be served if the main conclusions which arise from this study are briefly reproduced here for the convenience of reference.

There is no doubt that considerable progress has been made in the expansion of facilities at the elementary stage of education between 1950 and 1975.⁵ But, from the point of view of the goal of universal education, there are several major weaknesses in the present situation which need attention. About one child out of three is still out of school. The wastage rates are high and of every 100 children that enter Grade I, only about 25 reach Grade VIII. There are large variations in enrolments from region to region: the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are far ahead of the States of Bihar and Rajasthan. Even within the same State, there are large variations from district to district; and quite often, even within the same district, different areas show equally large variations. The enrolments in urban areas are generally much better than those in rural areas; the enrolments of boys are much better than those of girls; and the enrolments of the children of the well-to-do and the educated classes

are far better than those of the poor and the uneducated social groups. The quality of elementary education also continues to be very poor; and, in particular, the attempts to introduce work-experience and social service have not succeeded. It is, thus, evident that in spite of considerable progress achieved in the past 28 years, the tasks to be done are formidable.

The existing model of the formal system of education, on which we place exclusive dependence, is a major hurdle that prevents the spread of education to the poor people. A reform of the highest priority, therefore, is to transform this system radically on the following lines :

- (a) The single-point entry system should be replaced by a multiple-point entry under which it will be open for older children of 9, 11, or 14 to join schools in separate classes specially organized for them.
- (b) The sequential character of the system must go; and it should be possible for older children to join the prescribed courses at any time and also to complete them in shorter or longer periods.
- (c) The exclusive emphasis that is laid in the present system on full-time institutional instruction should be replaced by a large programme of part-time education, arranged to suit the convenience of children who are required to work.
- (d) The exclusive emphasis on the utilization of full-time professional teachers should go. An attempt should be made to utilize all the teaching resources available in the local community; and the services of part-time local teachers and even of senior students should be fully utilized for promoting instruction in the elementary schools.
- (e) There should be no rigid demarcation between primary schools and pre-schools. Girls who are required to look after young children should be encouraged to bring them to the school. They should be taken care of in pre-primary school, or creches attached to the primary schools which are managed by the girls themselves, by turns, under the guidance of the teachers. This will provide a valuable service at a minimal additional cost and assist materially in the spread

5. For details, see the statistics at the end of the book.

of education among girls from the poorer families.⁶

The other major hurdles for the development of the programme are the heavy cost involved and the lack of parental cooperation. With regard to the first, it may be pointed out that the total cost of a programme of universal elementary education based on an almost exclusive dependence on the formal system of education, as it now exists, will be very high and beyond the resources likely to be available in the immediate future. It would, therefore, be necessary to reduce the costs of the programme to the extent possible through the introduction of a large non-formal element as indicated above and also by increasing the pupil-teacher ratio through the adoption of devices such as the double-shift system. With regard to the second, it will be necessary to develop a programme of adult education side by side with that of providing universal elementary education because the latter cannot succeed without the former, and because the best and the quickest results can be obtained only if both these programmes are developed simultaneously and in a complementary fashion.

Two important issues need attention with regard to the strategy of implementation. The first is that it would be desirable to enforce attendance in the age group 11-14 in the first instance and then to enforce it in age group 6-11 rather than *vice versa*. From this point of view, the children who have completed Classes I-V should be encouraged to study further in Classes VI-VIII, either on a whole-time basis or on a part-time basis, as may be necessary and convenient. Special classes should be organized for children in the age group 11-14 who either did not go to school at all or dropped out of it at some early stage, and they should be enabled to become functionally literate at least before they reach the age of 14 years. The second issue relates to the time-span of implementation. There is no doubt that the problem has become more complicated by being extended over a long period. It is, therefore, necessary to make a firm decision to implement this programme during the period of the next ten years. This will necessarily imply that the programme will

6. In view of the importance of the issue, a paper written earlier on the subject has been reproduced as Appendix I.

be implemented on the basis of a mass movement.

A major difficulty in the successful implementation of this programme seems to be the fact that the well-to-do classes in power are not interested in bringing about the radical changes necessary in the formal system of school education if elementary education is to be provided to the millions of poor people who live below the poverty line.

EXPANSION OF SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The British administrators took the view, on academic as well as on political considerations, that the expansion of secondary and higher education should be rigorously controlled and that admissions to both secondary and higher education should be selective. Even a document such as the Sargent Plan, which accepted the concept of universal elementary education, suggested that secondary education should be made available to only one child out of five and that higher education should be made available to only one young person out of fifteen who completed the secondary school. The Indian nationalist opinion challenged the political motivations underlying these official proposals; and even on academic and social grounds, it argued that India needed more secondary and higher education rather than less and that a policy of overall restriction of enrolments and selective admissions would adversely affect the interests of the deprived social groups who found vertical mobility through education. On grounds of equality, therefore, it advocated free expansion of secondary and higher education and was not prepared to accept even the principle of selective admissions. The main point to determine is whether this system, as it now functions, does promote equality; and, if it does not, to suggest alternative egalitarian policies.

It is well known that the expansion achieved in secondary and higher education since 1961, and especially since 1947, is almost phenomenal.⁷ But it will be wrong to assume that this expansion has been solely due to our desire to provide equality of educational opportunity. Several other forces are also at work. For instance, this expansion is also due to a system of

7. For details, see statistics at the end of the book.

inbreeding which compels educated persons to start more schools or colleges for sheer employment so that jobless 'scholar ghosts' go on creating still more 'scholar ghosts'. Secondary schools and colleges are also often started to meet the ambitious of local communities or to serve as the power-base for politicians. The university degree has now become a status symbol and is eagerly sought after by all, especially by those who have not had the benefit of higher education for centuries. Very often, young persons linger on in secondary and then in higher education for the simple reason that they have nothing better to do. There can be only a limited educational significance for such dubious growth.

But, perhaps, the most important factor which has led to this expansion of higher and secondary education is the close link that has come to be established, over the years, between education (especially higher education) and a good job in the organized sector. When the British administrators created the new formal system of education and initiated the practice of appointing persons educated therein to posts under the government with the basic objective of popularizing the new education system, *they little realized that they were creating a formal education structure whose most important role was to enable ambition to climb to privilege.* But this is precisely what has happened. In the past 50 years, the exclusive emphasis which the British administrators placed on the formal system of education has increased rather than decreased; and it has now become virtually impossible to create and sustain any parallel system outside it. For instance, even the experimental institutions of national education that were initially set up outside the formal system of education and as rivals with it were ultimately coopted and absorbed within the system. What is even more important, the rewards and privileges available to the survivors of the system have increased immensely in the past 56 years and the gap between the affluence of the survivors and the poverty of the non-survivors has become very significant. This effect is further strengthened by our artificial and irrational wage-structure which rewards white-collar jobs (for which the system mostly prepares its students) infinitely better than blue-collar ones. Consequently, the competition to get into the system has increased by leaps and bounds. Every person among the well-to-do

classes who desires to retain or improve his privileged position is compelled to enter the formal system of education and to strive to survive within it long enough and well enough to realize his objective. Similarly, every ambitious person from the poorer social groups also tries to enter the system to escape his dreadful lot and to become one of the privileged.⁸ The number of ambitious persons who desire to enter the system thus increases at a terrific rate from year to year. As unemployment among the educated increases, this struggle to climb to privilege becomes more and more like a lottery. But in spite of this handicap, the demand for admission into the system, as in all lotteries, continues to increase because the rewards available to the lucky survivors are dazzlingly high. Strong and persistent demands are, therefore, put forward for more and more colleges and universities. These are very difficult to resist, especially in democratic and 'soft' state like ours with all its populist slogans. A decision to restrict enrolments or to introduce selective admissions (which would also be justified on the basis of financial difficulties or improvement of standards), thus, becomes impossible to make; and as adequate resources are not available, what the state generally does is to dilute standards deliberately and to permit a haphazard and unplanned growth of secondary and higher education to meet the popular demand. But this does not solve the problem. In fact, it is this dilution of standards that leads to an intensification of the popular demand for further expansion which, in turn, leads to still further dilution of standards. This vicious circle has already been established in India for some years past.

With such a combination of forces at work, there is no doubt that the expansion of secondary and higher education has had both positive and negative results. On the positive side, it may be pointed out, this expansion, which has now spread to the rural areas and among the weaker sections of the community, has created a good deal of vertical mobility; and even today, secondary and higher education happens to be the most important channel of vertical mobility for the underprivileged groups.

8. It must be noted that the underprivileged strive not for the abolition of privilege as such, but for climbing into privilege. This basically unjust and inequitable system, therefore, is supported by both the privileged and the underprivileged groups.

What is equally important, this spread of secondary and higher education among the poorer sections has created a new leadership and generated new social and economic forces which tend to shift the balance of power to some extent from the urban to the rural areas and from the top to the intermediate classes. Since secondary and higher education does lead to modernization, this expansion has also helped to counter traditionalism to a considerable extent. On the negative side, the policy has led to a lowering of standards in a large majority of institutions, especially as adequate resources in men and materials are not available to match the expansion. The very rapid rate of expansion, which far outstrips the rate at which new employment is being generated, is also creating a serious problem of educated unemployment which is becoming worse every year and which is creating severe strains and stresses, not only in the school system, but also in the society itself. Campus disturbances have, therefore, become extremely frequent and unscrupulous politicians are busy using the restless students or the dissatisfied survivors of the system for spreading dissatisfaction against the government or for the narrow purposes of their own parties. The overall results of the system are, therefore, more negative than positive, and an urgent remedial action is called for.

This reform has become all the more urgent because, in spite of the open-door policy and subsidized low fees, the benefits of this expansion of secondary and higher education, quantitative as well as qualitative, mostly go to the well-to-do classes who use it to strengthen and perpetuate their privileged position. From the quantitative point of view, we find that only about 25 children out of every 100 that enter Grade I complete elementary education. Most of the children from poor families are thus eliminated at the elementary stage itself. By the time one reaches the end of the secondary stage, this proportion of children who manage to survive is reduced still further to about ten, out of whom about eight come from the top thirty per cent of the society and only about two from the rest. Hence, even if a policy of open-door admissions is adopted at the entrance to the university, the dice is already heavily loaded in favour of the haves. Qualitatively, the position is even worse. Because of the limitations on resources, and the compulsive need to secure expansion, we have developed a dual system in secondary and higher

education in the sense that there is a small core of institutions which maintain good standards and these are surrounded by a large periphery of sub-standard institutions. What happens in practice is that the children from the well-to-do classes generally get admission to this small core of quality institutions while the children from the poor families are ordinarily admitted only to the large periphery of substandard institutions. The concentration of the well-to-do classes in the quality institutions at the secondary and higher stages is, therefore, even greater. Both in quantity and in quality, therefore, it is the upper and middle classes who are the main beneficiaries of secondary and higher education; and the policy leads not to equality, but to continuation and strengthening of privilege.

There is only one exception to the general conclusion that the poor people get only marginal and fringe benefits from the system, viz., the deliberate efforts made to spread higher education among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Because of the liberal provision of hostels and scholarships at the secondary stage and the scheme of post-matriculation scholarships, the young men and women from these social groups are availing themselves of the system of secondary and higher education to a much greater extent than would otherwise have been possible. If the support now given to the programme at the secondary stage is increased, and if adequate provision is made to provide individual guidance to students and to place them in good institutions, the benefits accruing from the scheme would increase significantly still further. The experience of this programme shows that unless there is a large-scale and positive intervention on their behalf through comprehensive student support programmes, the young men and women from poor families would not be able to get full benefit from the present system of secondary and higher education. In other words, what is now being done for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would have to be improved and expanded; and the same facilities would have to be made available for all talented young men and women from poor families, irrespective of their caste or religion.

How can we make this inequitable system of secondary and higher education (which also bristles with problems of poor standards and increasing unemployment among the educated)

more egalitarian and effective? Several major programmes will have to be developed for this purpose and these will fall into two broad categories : (a) To make the existing system of institutionalized secondary and higher education more effective by improving standards and to ration access to it on the basis of merit and social justice; and (b) to help the young persons from the poorer social groups to have greater access to secondary and higher education.

The following suggestions will fall in the first category:

(i) Institutionalized secondary and higher education should be planned carefully and standards should not be diluted under any circumstances. This will necessarily imply a restriction on their expansion because the resources available are limited. The present policy of uncontrolled or free expansion of secondary and higher education must, therefore, be abandoned. This decision, however difficult and unpleasant it may be, will have to be made. To avoid this responsibility and to provide secondary and higher education at low rates of fees and on the so-called open-door basis by deliberate dilution of standards is a fraud on the community and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

(ii) Since the actual places available in institutionalized secondary and higher education will always fall short of the demand or even of the total pool of ability available, it will be necessary to ration them, on the basis of merit and social justice, between all deserving students. Steps will have to be taken to devise suitable tests of merit which will do justice to all categories of competence and not place exclusive emphasis on middle-class values or white-collar capacities. Care should also be taken to see that an adequate number of seats are reserved for students coming from the poorer sections of the society, for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, for girls, and for the first-generation learners. In the absence of such controlled system of admissions the underprivileged will never get equality of educational opportunity and the haves will continue to dominate the scene.

(iii) In the present system, students who continue their studies unbroken to the end of the university stage generally get an edge over others who have to break their studies to participate in the world of work and come back again to the school. This is not fair to the poorer sections of the community nor is it

educationally sound. There should, therefore, be every encouragement given to students who step off the educational system at the end of the secondary stage and come back later into the stream to pursue their studies further. In fact, such students are better suited and more mature and should be given every preference; and to encourage this healthy trend still further, service conditions should be so revised that persons who join lower down the line but improve their qualifications later on, should be given every encouragement and assistance. It may even be desirable to make a rule that no one shall be permitted to continue his studies uninterrupted to the end of the university stage. For instance, it may be a rule that one must work for at least a year at the end of the elementary stage before joining the secondary school and that one must work at least for a year or two at the end of the secondary stage before entering the university. Programmes of this type will integrate work and education much better than the present system which tends to isolate them to the detriment of both.

The following additional suggestions are put forward to increase the access of the poorer social groups or workers to secondary and higher education :

(i) Since most children from poor families do not complete elementary education itself, it may sound paradoxical, but it is still true that if equality of educational opportunity is to be promoted in secondary and higher education, steps will have to be taken at the earliest to ensure that universal elementary education is provided for children in the age group 6-14. It is only on this sound basis of equality at the elementary stage that the super-structure of equality in secondary and higher education can be built.

(ii) There is need for massive programme of financial support to the talented children from the poorer sections of the society. Steps will have to be taken to identify talented students at the end of the elementary stage and to help them, in every possible way, to complete their secondary and higher education. For this purpose, it will be necessary to evolve a large programme of hostels and scholarships, combined with placement in good selected institutions. In other words, the state must assume full responsibility for the secondary and higher education of all talented children from the poorer sections of the society.

(iii) For those who desire to receive secondary and higher education and qualify for it, but who cannot be accommodated in full-time institutions or cannot undertake full-time study for economic reasons, the widest possible opportunities for self-study and part-time education should be provided. All board and university examinations should be thrown open to private candidates; and education by correspondence courses or on a part-time basis should be available liberally, at both the secondary and the university stages, to all persons in every part of the country.

(iv) It is essential to delink, in general, the formal attainments in the educational system from employment in the organized sector, and, in particular, to abolish the monopoly that has been vested in the present educational system to certify the attainments of a person to determine his eligibility for various categories of jobs. For this purpose, there should be as many different certifying agencies as possible to testify the attainments of individuals. For instance, not only the boards and the universities, but every college and school should have statutory authority to certify the attainments of their students, leaving it to the society at large or to the employing authorities to decide the merit of such certificates. Similarly, all agencies involved in programmes of non-formal education and all institutions functioning outside the formal system should also have similar rights of certification. In the same way, the Union and the State Public Service Commissions should have the authority to hold their own examinations and issue their own certificates which could be valid for certain purposes. All employing agencies should hold their own examinations for recruitment, with strict reference to the requirements of the jobs. The universities would, of course, continue to hold examinations for admissions and to confer degrees. But these would be valid only for purposes of employment in the education system, and would not be prescribed as a qualification for any job outside it. For all other sectors of employment, examinations should be held by the employing authorities or by suitably constituted special agencies; and all examinations, whether by universities or by other agencies, should be open to all persons who have studied within or outside the formal system of education.

Equality of educational opportunity for the young will have

meaning only if we reform the present system of free expansion of secondary and higher education with open-door access on the broad lines indicated above.

THE COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM

In this context of promoting equality through education, mention must be made of an interesting recommendation put forward by the Education Commission (1964-1966). The Commission was of the view that it was the responsibility of the educational system to bring different social classes and groups together and thereby promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. It found that the educational system which was created in India by the British, and continued unchanged even after independence, was not only not fulfilling this role but was also tending to widen the gulf between the well-to-do classes and the poor people. It, therefore recommended a radical transformation of the existing system through the adoption of the common school. Its observations on the subject are so important that they have been quoted below *in extenso*.

“1.36 *The Common School*. In a situation of the type we have in India, it is the responsibility of the educational system to bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. But at present instead of doing so, education itself is tending to increase social segregation and to perpetuate and widen class distinctions. At the primary stage, the free schools to which the masses send their children are maintained by the Government and local authorities and are generally of poor quality. Some of the private schools are definitely better; but since many of them charge high fees, they are availed of only by the middle and the higher classes. At the secondary stage, a large proportion of the good schools are private but many of them also charge high fees which are normally beyond the means of any but the top ten per cent of the people, though some of the middle class parents make great sacrifices to send their children to them. There is thus segregation in education itself – the minority of private, fee-charging, better schools meeting the needs of the upper classes and the vast bulk of free, publicly maintained but poor

schools being utilized by the rest. What is worse, this segregation is increasing and tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses.

“1.37 This is one of the major weaknesses of the existing educational system. Good education, instead of being available to all children, or at least to all the able children from every stratum of society, is available only to a small minority which is usually selected not on the basis of talent but on the basis of its capacity to pay fees. The identification and development of the total national pool of ability is greatly hampered. The position is thus undemocratic and inconsistent with the ideal of an egalitarian society. The children of the masses are compelled to receive sub-standard education and, as the programme of scholarships is not very large, sometimes even the ablest among them are unable to find access to such good schools as exist, while the economically privileged parents are able to ‘buy’ good education for their children. This is bad for the children from the rich and the privileged groups. It gives them a short-term advantage in so far as it enables them to perpetuate and consolidate their position. But it must be realized that, in the long run, their self-interest lies in identifying themselves with the masses. By segregating their children, such privileged parents prevent them from sharing the life and experience of the children of the poor and coming into contact with the realities of life. In addition to weakening social cohesion, they also render the education of their own children anaemic and incomplete.

“1.38 If these evils are to be eliminated and the educational system is to become a powerful instrument of national development in general, and social and national integration in particular, we must move towards the goal of a common school system of public education

- ↳ which will be open to all children, irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status;
- ↳ where access to good education will depend not on wealth or class but on talent;
- ↳ which will maintain adequate standards in all schools and provide at least a reasonable preparation of quality institutions;

- ↳ in which no tuition fee will be charged; and
- ↳ which would meet the needs of the average parent so that he would not ordinarily feel the need to send his children to expensive schools outside the system.

“Such an educational system has, for instance, been built up in the USSR and is one of the major factors which have contributed to its progress. It has also been developed, in different forms and to varying degrees, in other nations like the USA, France and the Scandinavian countries. The traditional English system has been different and has allowed good education, under private management, to be largely reserved for those who have the capacity to pay the necessary fees. But recently, the so-called Public Schools have come in for strong criticism in England itself and it is not unlikely that a radical change may be initiated to make them more democratic. A somewhat similar system was transplanted in India by British administrators and we have clung to it so long because it happened to be in tune with the traditional hierarchical structure of our society. Whatever its past history may be, such a system has no valid place in the new democratic and socialistic society we desire to create.”

As an important component of the common school system, the Education Commission recommended the adoption of the neighbourhood school concept. It said :

“From this point of view, we recommend the ultimate adoption of the ‘neighbourhood school concept’ first at the lower primary stage and then at the higher primary. The neighbourhood school concept implies that each school should be attended by all children in the neighbourhood irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic condition or social status, so that there would be no segregation in schools. Apart from social and national integration, two other important arguments can be advanced in support of the proposal. In the first place, a neighbourhood school will provide ‘good’ education to children because sharing life with the common people is, in our opinion, an essential ingredient of good education. Secondly, the establishment of such schools will compel the rich, privileged, powerful

classes to take an interest in the system of public education and thereby bring about its early improvement.”⁹

There is really very little to add to the strong case for the proposal made out by the Education Commission. There is also no need to argue the case of the common school with the common people who have everything to gain and nothing to lose under this programme. The only group that stands to ‘lose’, not in reality but according to its own perception, is the class of well-to-do persons who now opt out of the system by sending their children to the special schools of one type or another and thereby also buy their freedom from the compulsion to improve the general school system. If this class could be convinced of the desirability of the reform, there is no problem in implementing the recommendation.

What are the objections of this class to the idea of the common school? The first objection is academic and refers to the poor quality of the general schools which, in their opinion, are ‘terrible’. The second argument is partly constitutional and partly theoretical. They attach great significance to the democratic right of the parent to choose the school for his child and claim that this right cannot and should not be abrogated under any circumstances. They also argue that this concept of the common school will run counter to Art. 30 of the Constitution and the rights guaranteed to the minorities thereunder. Finally, they also challenge the view that sharing life with the people is ‘good education’, and that their children will be contaminated if they come into too close a contact with the rabble. All things considered, there seems to be little possibility of overcoming the legal hurdles or bringing about a change of heart on the part of these classes and their agreeing to the proposal on moral or voluntary basis. The only practical method of implementation appears to be that the state should make a firm decision in favour of the proposal in the social and national interest and then introduce the new scheme through legislation. Although considerable opposition is expected, it will not be difficult for an enlightened and progressive national leadership to implement

the programme.

The crux of the matter is the method of implementation. One view is that the common school system should be introduced *immediately* without even waiting for the general schools to improve, because the very entry of the children of the rich and influential persons is the surest and the quickest method to improve them. The other view advocates that the main thrust of our effort should be on improving the schools so that there would be no desire on the part of the average parent to send his children to schools outside the system. The Education Commission supported the latter view because it believed that the classes would not agree to send their children to the general schools until they were substantially improved. But if the state can muster the will, the first alternative will be a quicker solution of the problem.

RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE FORMAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

As was pointed out earlier, the formal educational system created by the British administration was an instrument of educating the upper classes and not the poor people. Any proposals to provide equality of educational opportunity must, therefore, include proposals for changing the structure and content of this educational system. Mahatma Gandhi realized this and, therefore, laid great emphasis on his scheme of Basic Education under which he wanted the educational system to be built round socially useful productive work. From time to time, proposals were also put forward to change the character of the formal education system radically by the introduction of a large non-formal element. In particular, the late Shri R.V. Parulekar showed how the existing system of elementary education would have to be transformed through introduction of non-formal element if it was to serve the purposes of people’s education. Suggestions to the same end were also made by the late Shri C. Rajagopalachari and Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The Education Commission (1964-1966) developed these ideas still further, extended them to all stages of education, and made a number of radical

9. Report of the Education Commission (1964-66), para. 10.19.

proposals to change both the structure and the content of education.¹⁰ In other words, there was a growing realization during this period that, if true equality of educational opportunity was to be provided to the millions of poor people who lived below the poverty line, a radical reorganization of the formal educational system inherited from the British was inescapable; and the national leadership also lost no opportunity to declare, from every platform, that it was committed to do so.¹¹

It was pointed out earlier that unless this system was radically altered, it would not be possible to provide universal elementary education for all children in the age group 6-14. It was further shown that it would not be possible to create equality of educational opportunity even in secondary and higher education unless a large non-formal element was introduced in the system. It is, thus, evident that the formal system of education, as it is now organized, is the worst enemy of equalizing educational opportunity. In spite of this realization, and in spite of our oft-repeated commitment to transform this system radically, the unfortunate fact remains that we have allowed the system to continue almost unchanged over the past 54 years. This has been our greatest and most signal failure in educational reconstruction. This has also been the biggest hurdle in spreading education among the people and creating greater equality of educational opportunity.¹²

One understands why the British administrators adopted this model in the early nineteenth century. At that time, there was hardly any other model available; and, moreover, as they

wanted to educate the classes only, the inegalitarian character of the system became really a *plus* point in its favour. But what one fails to understand is the continuance of this model even to this day in spite of all our commitments to the education of the people and in spite of all the findings all the world over that it is impossible to provide adequate education to the poorer social groups and equality of educational opportunity unless this model is either abandoned or radically modified.

Direct Attempts to Promote Equality in Society (1947-1975)

Equality in education may rise into society. Alternatively, attempts to introduce equality in society may be reflected, and perhaps more effectively, in creating equality of educational opportunity. For a proper understanding of the problem, therefore, it is also necessary to review briefly the changes towards equality which we tried to introduce directly in society and the effect they have had on equality of educational opportunity.

As pointed out earlier, the Indian national leadership was committed not only to make changes in education but also in society through economic and political action. The objectives of this transformation were first spelt out in the constructive programmes which Mahatma Gandhi promoted side by side with his struggle for political independence and were later included in the Preamble to the Constitution, in the Fundamental Rights, and in the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Preamble to the Constitution, for instance, speaks of our solemn resolution to secure social, economic and political justice and equality of status and opportunity for all the citizens. In the political sphere, we adopted adult franchise and decided to devolve political power still further in rural areas through the programmes of a revival of village panchayats (Art. 40). The Constitution also made equality before law (Art. 14), equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (Art. 16), abolition of untouchability (Art. 17), prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth (Art. 15), and prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour as Fundamental Rights (Art. 23); and the Directive Principles of State Policy recognized rights to work, education

10. The problem has been discussed in detail in J.P. Naik, *Elementary Education in India : A Promise to Keep*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1974, Chapter II.

11. For instance, addressing the first Education Ministers' Conference organized after independence, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed : "Whenever conferences were called to form a plan for education in India, the tendency, as a rule, was to maintain the existing system with slight modifications. This must not happen now. Great changes have taken place in the country and the educational system must also be in keeping with them. The entire basis of education must be revolutionized." (Quoted in Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 421.)

12. This issue will be examined in detail in Chapter III which deals with the quantitative aspects of education.

and public assistance in cases of undeserved want (Art. 47), and promised improvement in the levels of nutrition, public health, and standards of living of the people (Art. 47), promoting with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the community (Art. 46), just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Art. 42), a living wage, full employment, and social and cultural opportunities to all workers (Art. 43), and promotion of welfare of the people (Art. 38).

We have tried to live up to at least some of these promises and have also achieved some results. The introduction of adult franchise has been an important egalitarian measure. The political authority of the erstwhile princely order has been liquidated, along with their purses and privileges. The enactment of the Hindu Code is definitely an achievement from the point of view of giving equality of status to women, although the uniform Civil Code for citizens is still a hope and although in this respect, as well as in respect of other social legislation such as the abolition of untouchability, the laws concerned have not been adequately supported by popular movements. We have mounted a big programme of health and medical services; but here also, as in education, the benefits mostly go to the urban areas and to the upper and middle classes. We have achieved some results with our welfare programmes. In the economic field, we have tried to work bravely on several fronts. We have tried to rearrange the agrarian relations structure, and, in particular, to abolish intermediary tenures and to ensure tenurial security to the actual tillers of the soil. There has been some re-distribution of land through legislation on land ceilings. We have also made attempts to provide a fair access to publicly supplied inputs and infrastructural services through the mechanism of cooperative distribution. A proposal for ceilings on urban property is also on the anvil. Life insurance and banks have been nationalized; so are coal mines and some textile mills. We have also expanded the public sector considerably and have tried to monitor the pattern of the private sector through an elaborate system of licensing, foreign exchange control, permits, adjustment in tax subsidies, and pricing policies. We have tried to control concentration of economic power to some extent, introduced several taxation proposals for re-distribution of income, and

enacted a good deal of progressive labour legislation; and so on. The results, however, have been rather tame. For various reasons, most of these measures have had only limited success; and not infrequently they have also accentuated certain evils such as tax evasion, black money, or corruption.

What has been the net result of all these attempts and to what extent have we been able to bring about real structural changes in society and a greater measure of equality? The answer must be, on the whole, very disappointing. At the attainment of independence, we had an inegalitarian society having a small proportion of well-to-do classes, while the bulk of the people lived below the poverty line. This picture remains essentially unchanged even today. It is true that some of the old classes such as the princes or the zamindars have disappeared while new classes such as the rich peasants have come up. The ruling classes now include the big businessmen, the middle level traders, money-lenders, and several other categories of middle men, all employees in the organized sector, including the employees of the Central and the State governments, public sector undertakings and even private enterprises, the well-to-do farmers, and all persons, who have received university education. At the same time, the proportion of the poor people living below the poverty line has remained more or less constant and, at any rate, their absolute numbers are now far larger than in 1947. We have not been able to meet their minimum needs; and even the modest objective of assuring a monthly income of Rs. 20 per head to every citizen (at 1960-61 prices) has not been reached as yet, and may not be reached even a decade hence. In spite of all the attempts to introduce direct social changes, therefore, the society continues to be largely inegalitarian.

It is this privileged class structure of property, salaried employment in the organized sector, and higher education which is proving to be the principal stumbling block for introducing equality and for giving a fair deal to the common man of India. It is those classes that have been the principal beneficiaries of the planning process, as of everything else; the whole exercise is meant for them; and even when it is not, there are diversions and miscarriages in implementation which ensure that the ultimate benefits of development percolate largely to them, by hook or by crook. The position has been well stated in the following

catechism of T.L. Peacock in *Maid Marian* :

Question : Why are laws made?

Answer : For the profit of somebody.

Question : Of whom?

Answer : Of him who makes them first, and of others as it may happen.

It is not that the poor people have not benefitted at all. They have received some crumbs, marginally, and incidentally, or "as it may happen".

Summing Up

What are the general conclusions we can draw in the light of this review of the attempts made over the past 160 years to promote equality of educational opportunity?

If we were to look back and compare the educational system we had in 1800 with what we have today, there is no doubt that we have made tremendous progress. Quantitatively, our educational system has grown immensely and is now the second largest in the world in terms of absolute numbers. Even qualitatively, the modern system is incomparably superior to the traditional one. It has helped us to run the democratic administration of the country, to create a stock of highly trained scientific manpower, to improve our agriculture, to modernize our industries, to develop the Indian languages, to provide health services of high quality, and to become a modernizing nation of considerable achievements and immense potential. These gains, most of which have been achieved after 1947, are out-standing and we have every right to be proud of them.

To what extent does this system provide equality of educational opportunity? To begin with, the very concept of equality, which did not have even a theoretical acceptance in 1800, is now an integral part of our thinking. The rigours of the hierarchical steel-frame have been considerably subdued and equality promoted, partly through direct efforts made to change the society and partly through the development of education. Our educational institutions are now open to all citizens irrespective of caste, religious or sex. Education has spread widely even in

the rural areas, and a good deal of financial support is available to children from poor families who desire to receive secondary and higher education. There has been a tremendous spread of education among women and an immense improvement in their status. Education has also spread widely among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other deprived social groups, and it is the largest and most effective avenue of vertical mobility for them. In spite of these gains, the fact remains that the educational system we have created is still highly inegalitarian. We have not been able to adopt the common school system, or to provide universal elementary education, or to transform the traditional system of formal education to meet the needs of the poorer classes or workers. Consequently, the bulk of the population which lives below the poverty line is practically outside the school system. These people are still mostly illiterate. A large proportion of their children, no doubt, do drop into the system. But they also drop out of it, sooner rather than later, so that only a small proportion of them complete even the elementary stage. The benefits of the educational system, especially at the secondary and the university stages, go mostly to the well-to-do classes who use it to strengthen and perpetuate their privileges. It is true that the poor people do get some marginal benefits and that a varying proportion of individuals from deprived social backgrounds are coopted into the system year after year. But one cannot also ignore the negative aspects of this phenomenon that it serves to legitimize a basically inegalitarian structure.



CHAPTER TWO

Quality

OF THE THREE BASIC GOALS DISCUSSED IN THIS BOOK, quality is most central to education. Quantity is relevant because we do not want education to be the preserve of a few to enable them to climb to privilege; and equality becomes relevant because we believe in social justice and do not desire to discriminate, in regard to educational opportunity, between one individual and another, except to provide special support to the handicapped, the deprived, or the underprivileged. But both these issues are external to education while quality is totally internal, its very life or soul. Any education without quality is no education at all : it will not be able to fulfil its promises and will also do immense harm.

The Basic Concepts

There is a good deal of confusion, in the literature on the subject, about the precise connotations of the concept of quality in education. Three different expressions – quality, standards, and efficiency – are used in a variety of meanings, sometimes as synonyms and sometimes to indicate different concepts either separately or in combinations. It is, therefore, necessary and desirable to define specifically a set of relevant concepts about quality in education.

In evaluating the 'quality' of an educational system as a whole or of any of its components (such as teachers or text-books, or a specific method of teaching and evaluation), it becomes necessary to discuss the following issues among others :

1. *Ends and Means* : It is often necessary to examine the significance or the relevance of the goals of education from the point of view of the two overriding purposes education has to serve : (a) the development of the individual in relation to himself, nature, and society; and (b) development of the society

itself.¹ Moreover, since means are as important as ends, the methods used to achieve the goals of education will also have to be subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny.

2. *Capacity* : Very often, one is required to take a view about the potential of a given education system to achieve its stated ends. Broadly speaking, this involves a discussion of its content, structure, personnel, organization, and finance.

3. *Level of Performance (or Standards)* : Here the main issues discussed relate to the actual performance of the system from time to time on the basis of given criteria and techniques of measurement adopted.

4. *Efficiency* : This involves consideration of the relationship between the actual performance of the system and its potential (or of input-output relationships which include problems such as maximizing the output for a given level of inputs or minimizing the inputs for a given level of output).

5. *Comprehensive Evaluation* : Very often, one is also required to take an overall *comprehensive* view of the education system or of one or more of its components from *every* point of view.

A good deal of confusion results because we mostly use only three expressions – quality, standards, and efficiency – to indicate the result of an evaluation under all these five different tasks. What is worse, we also use the same three expressions indiscriminately to denote all the five evaluations separately as well as in different combinations. I, therefore, propose, on an *ad hoc* but convenient basis, to use the following terms in the course of this book :

1. *Quality* : This should be looked upon as a comprehensive or master concept. Considerations of the quality of an educational system will, therefore, involve a consideration of all these independent variables, viz., significance, relevance, capacity, standards, and efficiency.

2. *Significance* : It is always desirable to discuss the ends and means together. The judgement regarding the worthwhileness of the ends and means of an educational system will indicate its significance.

1. These are not independent but related : individual development for all is not possible in a badly organized society and no social development is possible unless its individual members are properly educated and committed to social development.

3. *Relevance* : This may be defined as the relationship between an education system and the individual and social goals of development.

4. *Capacity* : This term will indicate the *potential* of an educational system to realize its goals, irrespective of its actual performance at a given place or time.

5. *Standards* : This concept will be used to denote the level of attainment of students in a given system of education.

6. *Efficiency* : This concept will be used when the relationship of the actual performance of a system to its potential is being discussed or questions relating to the input-output relationship are raised.

Quality of Education : British Phase (1813-1921)

Modern Indian education began with a debate on quality in the early years of the nineteenth century. The British administrators had a choice between two options and were keenly divided over them. One group (classicalists) was of the view that the indigenous system of education was good for the people and that it should receive full support from government. The second group (Anglicists) believed that a new educational system should be created which would teach European knowledge through the medium of English. The latter view ultimately triumphed, partly due to the able advocacy of Macaulay and partly due to the support of Lord William Bentick and enlightened Indians such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy.² The introduction of Indians to European knowledge had a liberalizing effect and helped the process of modernization but the thoughtless destruction of the indigenous system of education, especially of the elementary schools, was a very wrong policy. The attempt to cut the Indian people off from their own cultural roots also had bad repercussions which took us several decades to correct and which have not yet been fully eliminated. The effects of the introduction of the English language had also similar mixed results. It was a great advantage from several points of view and, in the initial stages, helped the flowering of the Indian languages as well. But the continued dominance of English in all the major walks of life has been a

disadvantage : it has stunted the growth of Indian languages and helped in the creation of elite groups who are by and large alienated from the masses.

The important point to note in this debate is the close link between the 'quality' of education and the social power-structure that defines it. The British administrators of the period defined 'quality' in the interests of British imperialism with the primary objective of displacing the elite trained in the indigenous system by a new class of people who would be favourable to their rule and to the capitalist system they were building up. Unfortunately, this link does not receive adequate attention and weightage in the discussions on quality.

This controversy between the old and the new systems of education came to an end with the Wood's Education Despatch of 1854 which also laid an elaborate foundation for the new system with the creation of education departments and the establishment of universities. Between 1854 and 1921, the modern education system which the British administrators wanted to create took concrete shape, sent its roots deep down in the social milieu, and became firmly established. As a starting point for discussion, therefore, it is necessary to analyse those features of this system which have a bearing on quality.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND PROCESSES

The British administrators had a limited educational objective: to create an educational system in India which would be broadly modelled after that in England and which would make India an asset to the Empire – a supplier of raw materials for the British industries and a buyer of its finished products. They emphasized, therefore, the individual rather than the social goals of education. In fact, the basis of the educational system they created here was the same as that in England, viz., a liberal individualist tradition based on competition. That this system should appear as natural and best to the British administrators of the day is understandable. But was it really the best system for the Indian people? There is no doubt that liberalism did considerable good in fighting against the narrow traditionalism

2. Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-78

of the Indian society of the period.³ It also led to several reform movements, including even the first steps towards political independence. But let us not forget that the ills of the Indian society were so many and so powerful that mere liberalism was too weak an instrument to bring about the needed transformation. It should not also be forgotten that the promotion of individualism and competition through education has had many negative aspects. In the Indian tradition, the individual was trained to efface himself in the interests of his family, kin group, or caste and to function in a cooperative rather than a competitive milieu. What we needed was a programme where the individual would be freed from the tyranny of caste and trained to think in social and secular terms, without destroying the cooperative values or inflating his self-centredness. This would have been possible through the adoption of social development as the goal of the educational system. But this was not done; and in a system almost exclusively devoted to the pursuit of personal goals and based on individualism and competition, the good in the old tradition was lost without destroying the tyranny of the caste. The promotion of individualism and competition, which could play a useful role in a society of expanding opportunities (such as the British one) or of unlimited new opportunities (such as the American one) did not also have much of a place in the inequitable Indian society with its decreasing opportunities. All that it achieved was the generation of a ratrace for privilege in which the upper and the middle classes had an immense advantage over the poor people.

Another important characteristic of the system, quite in keeping with the ideas of the period, was the excessive emphasis on information gathering with consequent neglect of the two other processes of education – development of skills (especially productive skills) and promotion of appropriate values. The educational system assumed that knowledge was something which was outside the individual, that it was good for the individual to acquire as much of it as possible and to store it in his brain, irrespective of the fact whether or not it was related to his life and environment, that the individual must be able to recall this

3. Gokhale welcomed all English education as good because it liberated the Indian mind from the "thrall of old world ideas".

stored knowledge whenever needed, and that the mere possession of knowledge was a power or privilege which put the individual concerned above those who did not have it and also entitled him to social and economic rewards. The inevitable corollary of this approach is to overemphasize the role of information-gathering in education as its most significant process, to lay undue emphasis on mere memorization and to develop, what Paolo Freire calls, the bank-deposit system of education, under which knowledge is to be deposited in the brain for withdrawal at will. It will also be readily seen that this is essentially a white-collar concept which denigrates both manual labour and production. As it happened, this outlook was also shared by the traditional educational system and by the classes of Indian society who were keen to avail themselves of the new education system. Consequently, this emphasis on information-gathering and comparative neglect of social and productive skills became an essential and deep-rooted feature of the new educational system.

As a corollary to the above, the skills which the new education system emphasized were verbal and linguistic. The study of the mother-tongue did not have priority. But even here, it was the ability to use the *standard* language (which was essentially a middle class value) that came to be rewarded. Much higher emphasis was laid on the proficiency in English, on the ability to pronounce it correctly, on correct spelling, on good handwriting (the typewriters had not been invented then), on the capacity to write good English, and on the ability to speak eloquently. In contrast with this, the production skills had no place at all in the education system. Nor was any attention paid to social skills; and even individual skills such as self-study habits or problem-solving ability were not emphasized.

CONTENT

As a corollary of the above, it follows that the content of education was narrow with an overemphasis on the study of languages and humanities. Although the Despatch of 1854 made a specific reference to the spread of Western science, both science and technology had a very small part to play in the education system. It is obviously not necessary to discuss all the different

curricula of this period in detail. For our limited purpose, however, it may be pointed out that the main object of the elementary stage, where the mother-tongue was the medium of instruction, was to teach the three R's and simple general knowledge related to day-to-day use.

The main objective of the secondary stage was to teach the English language: at the lower secondary stage, English was taught as a subject; and at the higher stage, it was used as a medium of instruction. It was, therefore, in higher education only that attempts were made to spread European knowledge. This had two undesirable consequences : (a) higher education became the most significant stage and elementary and secondary education were more like its preparatory steps than self-contained or terminal stages; and (b) because of the very limited time available, the standards of higher education were necessarily low and a good deal of what was taught in universities and colleges really belonged to the school stage. Moreover, higher education was not as diversified as it ought to have been (the general education in humanities and languages taking the lion's share of the enrolment), and professional education and research were largely neglected.

METHODS OF TEACHING AND EVALUATION

Because of its emphasis on information-gathering, the system laid considerable emphasis, as was stated earlier, on rote memorization. This weakness was further accentuated by the use of English as medium of instruction. A system of external examinations was introduced and it came to dominate the entire educational process. Because of the imperialistic character of the administration, the system also tended to be centralized, uniform, and rigid. These weaknesses became so deep-rooted that we are not able to shake them off even today.

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCE

The funds allocated to education were far too limited even in 1921. The control of the system was also firmly vested in the education departments which were dominated and controlled by a small cadre of I.E.S. officers who were mostly ex-patriates.

How does one assess the quality of this system of education? By 1854, the controversy between the traditional and the new systems of education had been finally decided in favour of the latter. Hence the quality of the new system has now to be judged, not in comparison with the earlier traditional system to which the new system was undoubtedly superior, but from the point of view of the needs of the society itself. Quite obviously, the new education system cannot be rated high from this larger viewpoint. Its principal assets were the dominant liberal studies of languages and humanities, the good command over English which it gave to most of its students, and the access it provided to European knowledge. On the other hand, its weaknesses were far too many. It over-emphasized information-gathering, and rote memorization. It laid undue emphasis on verbal and linguistic skills, to the almost total neglect of the manual and socially productive ones. The value system it inculcated had some positive aspects, but was on the whole very negative in the Indian context. The content of education was too narrow; elementary education was mostly confined to three R's and a little general information; secondary education was largely devoted to the study of English; and higher education did not maintain good standards and was not adequately diversified. What is worse, all the qualitative concerns of the system, its value system, attitude to knowledge, emphasis on verbal and linguistic skills, and content were favourable to the well-to-do classes and un-favourable to the poor mass of toiling workers. Consequently, the inequalitarian character of the system was strengthened further.

One point must be made. Within these limitations, the system did function with considerable efficiency in the sense that it did achieve, to a fair extent, the goals which it had set before itself. This was due to several factors. The bulk of the students in secondary and higher education belonged to the upper and the middle classes. The teachers were fairly competent and conscientious and proved effective. At the elementary stage, however, the attempt to extend to the poor people an education system basically meant for the well-to-do middle classes did not succeed and the rates of stagnation and wastage became disturbingly high. It was also a great advantage that the size of the system had not expanded beyond manageable proportions.

Above all, one extraneous factor whitewashed all the weaknesses of the system and proved to be its saviour, viz., all the survivors of the system could easily get a job in the government or in the organized sector or could make a good living as self-employed persons in some of the modern professions. This kept up the motivation of the average student, maintained the prestige and the popularity of the system, and helped it grow in spite of all its weaknesses.

It may be worthwhile to compare two contemporary assessments of the quality of this educational system. The first is the assessment of the British administrators themselves. They were unhappy at the high rates of wastage and stagnation at the elementary stage. They were particularly unhappy at the indiscipline among the students in secondary and higher education (which was only another name for the national upsurge that was now growing in the country) and at the fall of standards at these stages (which, to them, meant only a fall in the standards of the average student's command over the English language). They would have liked to vocationalize the secondary stage and to make it terminal. But in the absence of effective programmes of economic development, their attempts in this direction did not succeed. They also realized that a reform of higher education was urgent, and it was this realization that had led to the appointment of the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19). On the whole, they took the view that the system they had introduced was basically sound, and that the main problem was undue expansion of secondary and higher education and deterioration of standards. They, therefore, favoured an improvement of standards rather than a further expansion of the system.

The same educational system, however, appeared entirely different, from the point of view of quality, to Indian national opinion. Till about 1900, there was not much discontent against the system. But in the first two decades of this century, dissatisfaction began to grow on several grounds. There was a strong feeling that education should be under Indian control and developed in the interest of the nation. The attempt to cut off our cultural roots and to display European knowledge as a *summum bonum* was also resented. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "I will let the winds from all quarters of the world blow in through the windows of my house. But I will refuse to be blown off my feet

by any." There was also a growing demand for the introduction of compulsory elementary education. The Indian people also wanted further and more rapid expansion at the secondary and university stages because it was this education which was helping the modernization of the country. The overemphasis on the teaching of English came to be criticised, and a demand was put forward that the medium of instruction at all stages should be an Indian language and that early steps should be taken to give at least secondary education through the medium of an Indian language. The neglect of the teaching of science and technology was severely criticised and it was urged that technical education and industrial development of the country should be given high priority. The attempt of the British administration to inculcate loyalty to the Crown was strongly resented, and a demand was made that patriotism should be one of the important values to be promoted through education. In fact, in 1921, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to the students to boycott schools and colleges which were having a harmful effect; and several institutions of national education were started in the country during this period as an important innovation out-side the formal system.⁴ It was this growing discontent against the system that prompted the British government to transfer education to Indian control. It may also be pointed out incidentally that the wide divergence between these two evaluations shows how quality has deep socio-economic roots.

Quality in Education : Indian Phase (1921-1975)

In evaluating the progress made in the qualitative improvement of education during the Indian phase spread over the past 54 years, and especially since independence, two major points have to be kept in view. One readily understands and forgives certain failures of the educational system as created by the British, partly because it was an alien imperialist power and partly because the modern developments in educational theory were not known at that time. But the same cannot be said of Indian administrators, especially since independence. We have a right to expect that

4. See note on 'National Education' in Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.* pp. 298-308.

our own government would pay adequate heed to the following important aspects of the problem which have now become prominent in the development of educational systems.

1. Education and development are not two different things but the two sides of the same coin : education should lead to development and development should create the motivation for education as well as provide the tools for it. This was the basic recommendation of the Education Commission (1964-66). The social goals of education, therefore, need far greater emphasis than individual goals, especially in a developing society which has accepted socialism.

2. The development of skills, especially productive skills, and promotion of values are far more important and need much greater attention than information-gathering.

3. From the point of view of linking education to development, its content must emphasize

- ↳ literacy and language skills which make an individual largely autonomous for further learning;
- ↳ numeracy and mathematical skills;
- ↳ techniracy or the essential knowledge of science and technology;
- ↳ work-experience and social service;
- ↳ liberal, rational, and secular orientation;
- ↳ political education; and
- ↳ ethical or moral education based on austerity, self-restraint, and concern for others.

These fundamentals should really permeate all stages of education, only the details varying in accordance with the age and maturity of students.

4. In the interest of creating an egalitarian society and equality of educational opportunity, we must see that quality does not get linked to privilege and all bridges built earlier between quality and privilege must be destroyed.

5. Quality should be defined, not in narrow middle class terms, but in the interest of the people as a whole. It is recognition of a large variety of competences and the grant of equal status to them that will make 'quality' compatible with both 'equality' and 'quantity'.

On the basis of the above evaluative criteria, our record of

achievements and failures becomes quite a mixed bag; there have been several change in the quality of education, some positive and some negative, while some of the more objectionable features of the earlier system have continued almost unchanged to this day.

ACHIEVEMENTS

An important change introduced in the educational system and which has a definite qualitative impact is that the spread of European knowledge ceased to be the grand objective of education. Today, we regard preservation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge as the goals of education. This is a universal quest of man, and we welcome all knowledge acquired by other nations, whether in Europe or outside, and we have also developed our research well enough to make our own contributions to knowledge. The studies in our education system are no longer Europe-centred, as they once were; and the core of the studies is now built round India, our history, our present situation and problems, our needs, and our aspirations. Our university studies are no longer over-dominated by languages and humanities. They have been immensely diversified with emphasis on science and technology. We have also attained a fairly respectable place in the community of nations in this universal pursuit of knowledge as is evident from the size of our high-level trained manpower and our achievements in the field of agricultural, nuclear, and space research. Obviously, there is a good deal more to be done. But we have made remarkable progress in this field in the past five decades, and this is one respect in which, our standards are far better today than what they were in 1921.

We have also moved a good deal away from the dominance that the study of English had in the education system (and also in the courts and administration), although our attitudes on the subject still continue to be ambivalent. Between 1921 and 1947, English practically ceased to be the medium of instruction at the secondary stage. Steps are now being taken to make the Indian languages the media of instruction at the university stage. A programme of preparing materials in the different Indian languages for use in higher education has been initiated, and it is making some progress. The Indian languages are also being

adopted in the administration at all levels. With the large expansion of secondary and higher education that has taken place, the average student's command over English has necessarily deteriorated. But as English still continues to be the language for getting prestigious and well-paid jobs, a large number of families send their children to English medium schools right from the nursery stage so that the number of English medium schools has shown a very large increase and they have become a sub-system for the privileged to preserve their position. Hindi is steadily gaining ground as a link language and is gradually replacing or supplementing English for certain purposes. In an emotive and explosive issue of this type, neither effective planning nor forced pace is possible or even desirable. One can only persist doggedly in the promotion of certain agreed programmes and wait patiently till the problems sort themselves out over time.

A major thrust of our efforts to improve quality in the past five decades has been to upgrade the information content of our syllabi at all levels and in all subjects. A comparison of our syllabi in 1921 with those in 1975 at the elementary stage, at the secondary stage, and in the different subjects at the university stage will clearly bring out two points: we now impart information in a much larger variety of subjects than at any time in the past; and that, in each subject, and at each level, we are continually trying to reach higher standards. A good deal has also been done to provide for co-curricular activities and to raise their level. Side by side, improvements have been made in textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. Considerable resources, partly provided by the state and partly raised by the community, have been invested in improving the physical plants of educational institutions. The education departments have been strengthened, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to deal with the challenges of the expanding system; and increasing investments have been made in the provision of student services and amenities. These reforms, along with the improvement in the general education and professional training of teachers which has been brought about in the meanwhile, have also made it possible to improve the methods of teaching to some extent. It is these developments, taken together, that have led to considerable improvement in the standards of information which the

average student of today shows in comparison with his counterpart in 1921. With the explosion of knowledge that is taking place in the world, this is welcome; and we may even feel proud of the fact that our children today know many more things than their counterparts did in 1921 or in 1947. But as the programme is now being implemented, one does have some misgivings and wonder whether all this attempt to turn out so many 'memory machines' with ever-increasing content is really worthwhile.

Another major thrust of our efforts in qualitative improvement has been on improving the quality of the different inputs into the education system. For instance, we have tried to raise the level of general and professional preparation of teachers at all stages. In 1921, the bulk of elementary teachers had only completed the elementary school and a large proportion of them had received indifferent or no professional training. Today, the completion of the secondary school is the minimum general qualification for an elementary school teacher, and the proportion of even graduates among them is increasing. The bulk of them are trained, the duration of training has been raised, in most cases, to two years, and the quality of training has been considerably improved. The teachers at the secondary stage – the bulk of whom were only matriculates in 1921 – are now graduates, with a fair proportion of post-graduates. The bulk of these teachers are also trained and the quality of training has been improved. A similar upgrading of qualifications has also taken place at the university stage, especially in the university teaching departments and good colleges. These reforms have been facilitated by two developments: expansion of secondary and higher education which has increased the output of matriculates, graduates, post-graduates, and persons with research degrees; and the deliberate policy, which has been pursued, especially since 1947, of improving the remuneration and service conditions of teachers. A comparison of the scales of pay of teachers in 1921, or even in 1947, with those prevalent today will show a great improvement in this regard, even after adjustment for rise in prices. This is certainly an achievement, although one would like to see the school teachers paid better and the gap between university and school teachers reduced.

MAIN FAILURES

Unfortunately, there is also a considerable negative side to this picture, and several developments of the past five decades have had an adverse effect on the standards of education. For instance, there has been a great emphasis on the expansion of facilities at all stages so that the resources available for qualitative improvement – which has always been a second Priority – have been far too inadequate. The qualitative reforms have not also been pursued with zeal, and continuity of effort which is needed for achieving worthwhile results. It has also not been possible to keep pace with the rapid expansion taking place so that even as the number of good institutions is increasing and some of them are becoming better, the number of substandard institutions has also been increasing very fast, especially because, under pressures of popular demand, it has not often been possible to insist on the fulfilment of even the minimum standards in the new institutions that are being established. The system still continues to be highly centralized and rigid, with little freedom for experimentation or creative innovation on the part of schools or teachers. There is an emphasis on uniformity and an unwritten convention that either everybody moves or none moves so that, in practice, everyone gets almost totally immobilized. The efficiency of the system has deteriorated and perhaps the factors that have affected the standards in education most are the weakening of motivation among students, deterioration in professional standards among teachers, and breakdown of the day-to-day functioning of the educational institutions over long periods of time due to disturbances of some kind or the other. Very often, the normal educational process in the class-room just does not take place.

Equally serious are our failures to carry out even those programmes of qualitative reform whose need has been universally accepted. For instance, not much has been done either for the development of skills or for the promotion of values. In so far as development of skills is concerned, there have been gains as well as losses. In good schools, which are not too many, attempts are being made to develop skills other than those of verbal or linguistic ability which were almost exclusively cultivated in 1921, and some attention is paid to such skills as development

of self-study habits or problem-solving ability. The physical and artistic skills receive much better attention at present, and programmes of physical education, games and sports, and art and culture have found their way into a fair proportion of schools. But in the majority of institutions, little is done beyond imparting of information, and even the verbal and linguistic skills are not properly developed. Above all, very little is being done to develop productive and social skills; and two significant programmes of reform, the introduction of work-experience and social service, remain largely unimplemented.

With regard to values also, little progress has been made, and there has perhaps been some sliding back as well. The liberal, individualistic, and competitive philosophy on which the educational system functioned before 1921 still continues to be the basic philosophy underlying the education system. In fact, there does not even appear to be a general recognition of the fact that a change is called for in this situation. The necessity to promote a number of other important values has been recognized, especially since independence. For instance, it is now recognized that we must cultivate a rational and scientific temper; democratic values such as tolerance, capacity to see the other man's point of view, willingness to give and take, and ability to work in plural groups with shared objectives; socialist values such as respect for and commitment to equality and social justice; and secular values such as respect for all religions and capacity to manage civic affairs without reference to religion. National integration is recognized as a very major value to be promoted and the need to fight against forces of linguism, regionalism, and communalism has also been accepted. Unfortunately, very little work has been done to guide the schools and teachers in evolving practical programmes to promote these values and few practical steps are being taken to give effect to all this wishful thinking. On the other hand, the crisis in values which one sees in society is necessarily being reflected in the education system itself. The agitational approach in politics, which sanctifies destruction of public property, has been reflected in student behaviour. The political approach to industrial problems, which sanctifies strikes for any reason whatsoever, has also been reflected in the school system and the functioning of educational institutions is frequently disturbed. Corruption is no longer limited to politics

and administration; it has found a place in education also and both students and parents are developing sceptical attitudes about impartiality and fairness of the educational system in such matters as admissions and examination results. It, therefore, appears that, in so far as cultivation of values is concerned, the position today has probably worsened.

By far our greatest failure, however, refers to the link between quality and privilege. The British administrators, with their emphasis on the education of the upper and middle classes, deliberately built a link between quality and privilege through such measures as the use of English as the medium of instruction, the emphasis on middle class values and competences of verbal ability and linguistic skills, the denigration of manual labour and productive skills, the one-sided content of education, the basic value system of individualism and competitiveness, and the creation of special high quality private schools for the well-to-do. We cannot of course blame the British because this was precisely what they wanted to achieve. But it is a pity that, in spite of all our professed commitment to social justice and equality, little has been done to break this link during the past 54 years. The number of public schools, independent English medium schools, and such other special institutions for the well-to-do is now far larger than what it was in 1921 and has shown considerable increase since 1947. It is generally the well-to-do classes that get admission to good institutions at all stages. The Education Commission proposed that the common school system, with the neighbourhood school concept, should be adopted so that this link between quality and privilege could be broken at the school stage. But as was shown in the preceding chapter, this proposal has not been implemented. At the university stages also, admission to quality institutions such as good colleges, engineering and medical courses, and institutes of technology or management is largely secured by those from the well-to-do families educated in English medium schools. In fact, one would be even justified in holding that the link between quality and privilege is much stronger now than what it was in 1921.

What is Quality?

With this experience before us, it is obvious that our first major task is to define 'quality' in education.

In this context, it is necessary to remember that all concepts of quality have deep socio-cultural roots : an individual (or a class) defining 'quality' will generally define it in such a manner that he is identified with quality and placed in a vantage position by the definition itself. For instance, the Brahmins who are more nimble with their tongue than with their hands will always define quality in terms of verbal or linguistic skills. Similarly, quality can be defined both on an egalitarian and on an inegalitarian basis, according to the value premises one adopts.

Excellence is not of one type and there are immense variations of excellence such as excellence in different human abilities, in different branches of knowledge, in production processes, and in different cultural and artistic forms. Even a single human ability can find expression in a large variety of excellence, e.g., skill in the use of fingers can seek excellence in embroidery, surgery, or music. If one is committed basically to equality, one would tend to regard all these different forms of excellence as basically equal. In such a case, the definition of quality would not conflict either with equality or with quantity. On the other hand, if one were committed to elitism or inegalitarian hierarchical class structure, one would tend to define excellence in a narrow way (which will necessarily imply an arbitrary definition based on ulterior considerations rather than on merits) and try to arrange the different types of excellence in a hierarchy suited to one's own selfish interests. We must be aware of these pitfalls and ensure that groups-in-power are not allowed to define equality to suit their own purposes.

It is equally necessary to remember that quality in education is a relative concept and can be defined only with reference to (a) our concepts of excellence in individual life and society for the improvement of which we propose to use education as an important instrument, and (b) our concepts of education itself.

THE NEW SOCIETY

As a first step towards a redefinition of quality, therefore, we must try to visualize, as clearly as possible, the new social order based on justice, equality, freedom, and dignity of the individual which we desire to create in the country. It was Mahatma Gandhi who, for the first time, initiated a dialogue on the subject. Some of his proposals then appeared unrealistic. But what he said then is all the more relevant now when the whole world has been disillusioned about the highly industrialized, consumer-oriented, and centralized mass societies which we have created and which now threaten the very existence of man on account of growing population, exhaustion of non-renewable resources, stock-piling of nuclear weapons, increasing human alienation, and deepening tensions between the rich and the poor nations.

It is unfortunate that the dialogue which Gandhiji initiated on this subject has not been intensively pursued. Both in the national and in the international contexts, however, it is very urgent for us to re-examine the societal models we have adopted and to reformulate our social and individual goals. For instance, our international position is that the poor countries must be given a better deal and that, for this purpose, the resources of the world, which are now largely controlled by the rich nations, will have to be more equitably distributed between all the nations. This will have to be reflected in the national policies also. The well-to-do classes must begin by sharing poverty with the masses; the conspicuous consumption of the well-to-do (and especially of the top 30 per cent of the people) will have to be reduced; and the poor people (especially the bottom 30 per cent of the people) will have to be assured a minimum standard of living through a programme of guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage and an adequate public distribution system of essential consumer goods. This is the only way to abolish the grinding poverty of the masses which is our most crucial problem.

The rural areas will have to be the centre of all our developmental efforts and receive the highest priority in the investment of human talent, energy, and resources. The development of agriculture will have to be promoted through the creation of largely self-sufficient agro-industrial communities, thus shifting the emphasis away from urbanization and especially from the

unhealthy growth of huge metropolitan cities such as Bombay and Calcutta. The development of industry will have to be attempted, not on the basis of capital-intensive, mass-production-oriented high technology, but through labour-intensive techniques which will aim at production by the masses. The provision of essential social services such as health and education will have to be radically re-structured with a decrease in emphasis on professionalism and consumption-orientation and an increased emphasis on the autonomy and freedom of the individual and his participative contribution.

Above all, the highest priority will have to be given to population control because, if the total population does not level off at a desirable point, no attempts at development are likely to succeed. It also follows that the value system of such a society will also be radically different. We will have to abandon the basic assumptions of the industrial society, viz., unlimited stimulation of individual appetites for goods and services, unlimited exploitation of natural resources through mass production which involves huge waste, and consumption of goods and services as an end in itself. Instead, the emphasis in the new society will be on self-restraint, conservation of natural resources, production of cheap, durable, and easily repairable goods, and generally on a life of plain living combined with limitless pursuit of knowledge and excellence. The issue is obviously too vast to be discussed here in adequate detail or depth. But what is stated above will highlight the urgency of defining the direction and content of 'development' with which education is closely linked. Unless this is done, the objectives and techniques of education cannot be precisely conceived.

THE NEW EDUCATION

As education is closely related to society, our concepts of education will also have to be changed radically with a view to suit the requirements of the new society we propose to create. These have many significant aspects some of which were referred to in Chapter 4 in relation to equality. Some others will be discussed in the next chapter on quantity. For convenience of discussion, only those aspects of the new concept of education which are related to considerations of quality will be discussed here.

The first of these relates to the reordering of priorities among the goals of education. Education has always had two goals : development of the individual and development of the society. In the past, because of our emphasis on the liberal, individualistic, and competitive approach, the goal of individual development was highlighted and that of social development was generally ignored. When the creation of the new society becomes *the* national objective, it follows that the highest priority will have to be given to the social objectives of education and their effective linking with development. This does not, of course, mean that the individual goals of education will be ignored. They are important and will continue to be pursued. But emphasis will be laid on the point that individual interests have to be subordinated to the social good and that even the fulfilment of individuals can come only through their cooperative effort to develop the society as a whole.

The priority to be given to the different processes of education will also have to be reordered. The highest emphasis will have to be placed on the inculcation of values (which now gets the lowest priority); the next emphasis will have to be on the development of skills (especially on social and productive skills); and information-gathering (which now gets the highest priority) will have to be greatly de-emphasized. Similarly, there will have to be consequential modifications in the underlying basic values of the educational system. For instance, it can no longer rest on the present basis of liberalism, individualism, and competition; and we will have to remodel it squarely on the basis of a deep commitment to social development and cooperation. In the same way, the values of social justice and equality and the ethical concepts of individual autonomy and responsibility, self-restraint and consideration for others will have to receive the highest emphasis. It will also follow that, if these basic changes are accepted, there will have to be corresponding changes in the content of education⁵ and in the organization of the system.

THE NEW CONCEPT OF QUALITY

It is obvious that old concepts of 'quality' will need radical

modifications in the light of these changes in our concepts of society and education. Quality of education will now have to be measured in terms of its capacity to create the new social order with its emphasis on equality, austerity, abolition of poverty, cooperation, self-restraint, consideration for others, and intensive pursuit of knowledge and excellence. An educated man will have to be judged, not only on the basis of his personal attainments, but even importantly by his social commitments, by the extent to which he has internalized the new value system, and by the contribution he has made to social development.

Quality will also no longer be defined in elitist terms. In fact, in this new milieu of emphasis on the abolition rather than on the continuation of privilege, a common school system would be regarded as providing 'quality' education just as all trends towards segregation would be regarded as undesirable. Similarly, it will not be possible, in this new set-up, to define quality narrowly and to identify it with a few categories of excellence (such as verbal or linguistic ability) to suit the vested interests of those in a position to lay down the law. On the other hand, it will now be necessary to define excellence in the widest possible diversity and to give equal status to all the infinite variety of skills that man is capable of. In particular, manual labour and productive work will have to be given the same status as intellectual work. For instance, a farmer or a carpet-weaver who achieves the highest excellence should have the same status as a university professor.

Similarly, the organization of courses at the different stages of education would also be such as to meet the requirements of this infinite diversity of excellence as well as its inherent equality. At the elementary stage, all children should be brought together in a common school system to receive a common course of general education; and secondary and higher education should be widely diversified to suit the immense plurality of individual aptitudes, needs, and capacities, with adequate bridges between different courses and without any attempt to introduce a hierarchy of relative significance between them. What is even more important, this equality of status given to the different categories of excellence should not remain only a definitional issue in educational theory. It should also be given recognition in terms of social status and economic rewards, i.e., they should be

5. Some of these will be discussed in the following section.

comparable in social status and should have a comparable wage structure. It will thus be obvious that, in this new background of an egalitarian society and an education system geared to social development, quality will cease to be linked to privilege. It will also not be antagonistic either to equality or to quantity but supportive of both.

Content of Education

Content of education is derived from, and is also closely related to, the goals of education, its processes, and its underlying values. It varies from stage to stage of education in order to suit the age and maturity of the students, and even at the same stage, from one subject to another. It is, therefore, neither possible nor necessary to discuss this issue in all its details. Our limited purpose would be served if attention is specially drawn to the major modifications needed in the content of education in view of the foregoing changes suggested in its goals, processes, and underlying values.

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

It is now realized all over the world that it is an error to keep education and development isolated from each other and that the two have to be integrated with one another. We should attempt reconstruction through education and education through reconstruction. This gives a valuable basis for determining the relevance of education; and it is necessary to restructure the curricula at all stages of education with the highest emphasis on relevance so that the motivation of students to learn is intensified and the social returns from education are immediate and worthwhile.

NEW APPROACHES TO ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

This emphasis on relevance and development will also affect our existing attitudes to the acquisition of knowledge. It was pointed out earlier that the existing educational system was dominated by information-gathering and that, in the new education system, much higher priority would have to be accorded

to the two other processes of the development of skill and inculcation of values. This does not mean that we have to reduce the information content of our education system. On the contrary, we do except even an increase in the information content because knowledge is being doubled in a period of ten years or so and an intensive cultivation of knowledge has become a 'must' for every nation in this highly competitive modern world. There is, therefore, no escape from the necessity for all our people to learn more and more and to reach ever-increasing standards of attainment in the years ahead.

This will be possible if two measures are adopted. The first is to develop programmes of non-formal education in a big way so that learning is not limited to the formal school and to a part of life only but becomes a life-long process and includes all learning, whether in the school or outside of it. Secondly, even within the formal school system, we will have to learn more intensively through the use of better methods of teaching and learning. The content of almost all courses at all stages will have to be modernized, upgraded where necessary, and diversified. These courses will also have to be closely linked to the immediate environment so that what is learnt becomes relevant, meaningful, and significant. What is even more important, the method of acquisition of knowledge will have to be radically changed. The emphasis will now have to shift from rote memorization to stimulation of curiosity, development of self-study habits, study of the community around, and problem-solving so that knowledge is acquired through improved motivation, sharpened powers of observation and original thinking, activities and a spirit of adventure. This will make it possible to learn more, to learn more easily and effectively, to retain better what is learned, and, above all, to develop the capacity to use what is learned in solving problems and improving life.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

It is extremely important to emphasize the teaching of science and technology at all stages of education; and particularly to lay special stress on vocationalization of the secondary stage. These aspects of the problem were very well dealt with by the Education Commission (1964-66) and there is little to add to

what it had said on this subject.

WORK-EXPERIENCE AND SOCIAL SERVICE

Far more difficult and important are the curricular programmes which do not exist at present and which will have to be developed in a big way and on a priority basis. I refer here to the programmes of work-experience and social service which, in a suitable form, should be introduced at all stages and should become an integral part of all education. The case for these programmes was advocated by the Education Commission (1964-66) which also made several potential recommendations for their implementation.

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Another component which is sadly lacking in our educational system (which is based on the individualistic approach) and which will have to be greatly emphasized in the new educational system (which will lay the highest emphasis on social development) is political education. It will consist of several distinct elements. The first is to create a proper pride in ourselves as a nation and as a people. This will include a study of our history and our cultural traditions with emphasis on our contribution to world civilization and our struggle for independence. It should also include a critical study of our failures to create a strong, egalitarian, and prosperous society, social evils such as unequal status to women, caste, or untouchability, and the many unhealthy traditions and superstitions that have crept into our social organization. This should not be a blind revivalist or chauvinistic approach but one that aims at an understanding of our own unique contribution to civilization, especially in the spiritual and philosophical fields, and at a realization that, on their basis, it is possible to build up a unique, egalitarian, and great social order in which poverty would be abolished and the dignity, autonomy, and freedom of each individual to pursue his quest for self-fulfilment could be guaranteed. It should also be based on the realization that we will have to strive on our own to create the unique new society of our dreams and that it cannot be created by borrowing a model, however good, from

outside : such social transplantations are neither desirable nor possible.

Another objective of political education is to give each individual a clear concept of the existing social organization and processes and of their strengths and weaknesses as well as of the new social organization and processes which we desire to create. At the international level, every individual should know our world view. At the national level, he should have a good understanding of the manner in which privilege is created and strengthened in our society through property, employment in the organized sector, and education. He must be aware of the existing models of production and production relationships and how they tend to concentrate economic power in the hands of a few individuals and to perpetuate poverty. He must also have a clear understanding of our political processes and how political power tends to get centralized. He must know the major problems facing the country, the alternative solutions for them, and the programmes that have to be developed to create the new social order based on the liquidation of privilege, abolition of poverty, decentralization of authority in all spheres, and enhancement of individual freedom and autonomy.

Political education will, thus, create an understanding of the varied dimensions of the programme of social development which the education system seeks to promote. This is necessary but not enough; and political education must also strive to inculcate the essential values and to develop the needed competence in each individual to make this development possible. For instance, political education must create a passionate commitment for social development in each individual, for grasping the present sorry scheme of things, and remoulding it nearer to national aspirations. This involves an understanding of the existing social and political processes operating in the country as well as of the need to generate new social and political processes favourable to the new social order, and a willingness to work for and participate in the latter. What is even more important, political education will also necessarily involve a willingness to fight for, to suffer, and even to pay with one's life, for the values and programmes of the new society. It is this awareness of the socio-political-economic issues combined with a commitment to transform the social order that constitutes the essence of

political education which then helps in the realization of the social objectives of the education system and transforms education itself into a powerful tool of social change.

Conceived from this point of view, political education is not the programme of social studies which now merely implies a colourless combination of history, geography, and civics. It cannot also be equated with education for citizenship which now implies merely a study of the Constitution, the five year plans, and the rights and responsibilities of the citizens, or, in short, an education of the individual for the *status quo*. On the other hand, a programme of political education in the context of the present Indian society will mean the creation of a feeling of revulsion and revolt against the inequities and deficiencies of the present system and a commitment to create a new social order at any cost. Political education as visualized here will not also mean an attempt to use education to spread the ideology of one party or another through the educational system. Instead, it will mean the proper training of every individual with regard to the basic issues involved in the transformation of the present society (which is sick and becoming sicker) so that he will be able to evaluate properly the ideology and programmes offered by different political parties and shall not be a victim of their narrow machinations. It will be organized at different levels in a form suited to the age and maturity of the educands. It will be an integral part of education at the elementary and secondary stages. A compulsory course in political education should be provided to all undergraduate students irrespective of their subjects. It should also form part of non-formal education and be included as an important component in the educational programmes for non-student youth in the age group 15-25 and in adult education.

This bold proposal about political education being an integral component of all education comes directly in conflict with the generally held view that education and politics should be separated from each other. It may be pointed out in this context that it is not desirable to isolate education from politics because both are powerful tools of social transformation and yield the best results if used in a mutually supporting manner. In a sense, it is also impossible to do so because no education is value-neutral and it supports either the *status quo* or some alternative(s)

to it. That is why all basic decisions in education relating to its objectives, processes, value systems, content, quality, and coverage are essentially political. Under these circumstances, a theory of making education politically neutral will only imply an indirect but strong support to the *status quo* and a tremendous handicap to all forces of change. There is, therefore, no alternative except to go all the way, and to make political education, which will support the creation of the desired social order, an integral part of education at all stages.

We have had a tradition of keeping education and politics apart. The question did not come to the fore explicitly till the end of the nineteenth century, although the official system of education which was supposed to be politically neutral was actually going ahead with its basic imperialistic objectives of teaching Indians to lose respect for their own best traditions and spreading European knowledge to create chains of intellectual slavery. But when the nationalist sentiment began to develop, patriotism, which ought to have been a basic value inculcated through the education system, was formally outlawed on the ground that education should not be mixed up with politics. But the same argument did not prevent the British administration from trying to inculcate loyalty to the Crown through education. The Indian nationalist opinion then refused to accept the theory that education and politics should be kept apart. In fact, Gandhiji insisted that all education must have a political content – and established national schools whose ‘standards’ from all the usual points of view were ‘poor’ but which insisted on and succeeded in giving a form of political education to all their students and produced hundreds of good freedom fighters.

Unfortunately, this policy has changed after independence. It began to be argued once more that education should not be mixed with politics, and this view has found support in the circles of the Congress, the party in power, and among academicians who desire to have political support without political interference (which is really asking for a good deal more than a mere insulation of education from politics). But the opposition parties, such as the Congress of the pre-independence period, began to insist that education cannot be isolated from politics and also on their right to work among the students. The Congress, therefore, had also to join in the game, and today the position is that

all political parties insist on working among students, although none of them has developed distinct educational policies or given adequate support to education. It must also be pointed out that the political parties do not have in view the provision of political education as described above when they insist on their right to work among students. What they really imply and actually do is to exploit students for narrow party ends at any cost, even at the risk of disrupting the education system itself, and without any regard to the long-term interests of the country, education, or the students themselves.

In the present situation, therefore, only one of the two alternatives seems to be possible: either all parties agree to a proper code of conduct in working among students or all of them continue their political activities among students for their own narrow ends with no holds barred. Since there is no agreement on the first policy, the second continues to reign supreme, and we have had the worst of all the worlds. There is no proper political education in our educational system so that education remains a weak tool of social development and it becomes impossible to protect students (who remain generally ignorant on all the basic issues) from the wiles of politicians. We have also not succeeded in insulating education from politics; and while we desired full political support without any political interference, what we have actually had is very little of real political support and plenty of political interference with disastrous consequences on the quality and efficiency of the education system. This does not augur well for the future of the country.

MORAL EDUCATION

Yet another component of the content of education which needs some attention is the oft-repeated demand for religious or moral education. The demand is so general and persistent that it needs a somewhat detailed examination.

It is true that there is a grave moral crisis in the society at present. But to assume that this crisis can be overcome by the introduction of moral education in schools is naive. While there is only a limited chance that the cultivation of moral values in the school system will rise into society and reform it, there is a far greater probability that the moral crisis in

the society will be reflected in the school system and contaminate it. It is really the adults in society or in the school system that set the moral tone and the children and the youth largely imitate it. To expect that the adults can behave as they like and that the children and youth can be reformed, irrespective of how the adults behave, through sermons on religion or ethics is moon-shine. The only effective way in which morals can be taught to children or youth is for all adults to restore moral values in their life and society. We must, therefore, resolve the moral crisis in the society directly in the society itself through proper political leadership, improvement in adult behaviour, and social controls, partly to get immediate results and partly to create the necessary atmosphere in which it would be possible to provide effective moral education in the school system.

This does not imply that we should not think of religious or moral education on its own merits : religious or moral education is obviously needed on a long-term basis even if there were no moral crisis in the society at present. Here, three specific issues need discussion. The first refers to problems involved in providing religious education, especially in government schools. Under Art. 28 of the Constitution, religious education cannot be provided in schools wholly maintained from state funds; but it can be provided in private schools, subject to the traditional 'conscience' clause. There are also tremendous difficulties involved in drawing up a common curriculum, in finding suitable teachers, etc., so that there is a general feeling that it may be desirable to leave out religion altogether and to teach moral education, either by reference, where necessary, to all the religions or without reference to any religion. The latter would probably be the better alternative.

The second issue refers to the content of moral education. The usual practice has been to emphasize the traditional personal virtues in courses of moral education. In modification of this, it may be necessary to design a special programme to suit our needs. For instance, we must insist on emphasizing secular values in a society where different religions are devoutly practised by a large proportion of citizens. From this point of view, we may give an idea of all religions to every child, emphasizing their basic unity. We may also stress the need, in a plural

democratic society such as ours, to confine the practice of religion to one's personal life and to keep our civic life secular or neutral to religion so that one's religion is neither an asset nor a handicap in so far as the rights and responsibilities of a citizen are concerned. Secondly, it is necessary to emphasize social values which tend to get ignored in our culture. For instance, values such as abstention from conspicuous consumption and willingness to subordinate one's interest to the common good of all need far greater emphasis than what they generally receive. Thirdly, even in regard to personal virtues, it is essential to emphasize values such as self-restraint, self-reliance, competence, sense of responsibility and duty and willingness to work, and if necessary even suffer, for a cause which one holds dear, because these are more relevant to the creation of the new social order which is our supreme objective. Fourthly, it is necessary to emphasize practical action. Moral education is one of those areas where one hears endless declamations on its significance but very little is done to work out details or to provide guidance to class-room teachers to design programmes for day-to-day use. Both these aspects of the problem need attention.

Finally, it is also necessary to consider the effective ways in which moral education can be given. Mere sermonizing, which is the common technique adopted, will hardly serve the purpose, even if it does not become counterproductive. The best way to give moral education is to enable the children to catch the values indirectly through the school programmes and through the school atmosphere. This is the most important advantage of making social development the chief objective of education. It is through the programmes designed to this end that one can indirectly provide the best moral education.

Performance of the Educational System

The goals of the educational system, the relative emphasis placed on its different processes, and its content, which we have discussed so far, merely indicate its capacity or 'promise' to help the creation of a new social order. But promise does not mean performance which has to be independently evaluated in terms of standards and efficiency; and our overall evaluation of the quality of an educational system will have to be based not only

on its promise but also on its performance.

STANDARDS

To begin with the standards of education, it may be pointed out that standards or levels of attainment will have to be measured in terms of both the inputs into the system and its outputs. The major inputs are: (i) teachers with special reference to their general education and professional preparation; (ii) curricula and supportive aids such as text-books or other teaching and learning materials; (iii) methods of teaching and evaluation; (iv) student services and amenities; and (v) physical plant of schools, including buildings, play-grounds, school farms, workshops, or equipment. In the case of all these inputs, it is possible to lay down criteria to measure standards, although some important inputs such as the sense of professional responsibility and integrity of teachers and their commitment to the welfare of the students entrusted to their charge, which are of crucial significance to quality of education, defy quantification or objective measurement.

The most important outputs are the men and women who come out of the system. The number of such persons and the degrees or distinction they receive (as indicative broadly of their knowledge and skills) can be objectively quantified and measured. But it is not possible to be equally objective in assessing their values and character. Another major output is research in various fields which is capable of being measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. There are, however, many indirect outputs of the education system such as its contribution to vertical mobility or to improvement of the quality of life in general which are not so easy to measure in objective terms.

Deeply concerned as we are with standards of education, we should have collected the relevant data and tried to measure, in so far as this would be objectively possible, the varying standards of these inputs and outputs at different points of time and also in different regions of the country. But this has not been adequately attempted. We do not even collect the data necessary for the purpose, although in several cases it is possible to do so without much cost and effort. Depth studies into the problem are conspicuous by their absence. The Education

Commission (1964-66) made some important recommendations on the subject which have remained unattended to. And yet, we are very fond of making personal non-verifiable statements on the subject regarding falling standards of education. In fact, if one were to go on the basis of what one hears on this issue in academic circles, one can easily come to the conclusion that, over the past 30 years or so, we have had a continuous decline of standards. This is hardly a faithful portrayal of the situation; and as the preceding discussion has shown, we have simultaneously progressed in several sectors, stagnated in others, and even regressed in some. It would, therefore, be more correct to say that the overall picture is a mixture of light and shade rather than of unrelieved darkness. What is more important, we will have to admit that standards have not kept pace with the growing needs of the time and that they are neither adequate nor internationally comparable.⁶

EFFICIENCY

Another measure of the performance of the system is efficiency or the relationship between the potential of the system and its actual performance. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate objective criteria to measure the efficiency of an educational system at any given point of time or to compare it over specific time intervals.

The measures most commonly used are : (i) the results of different public examinations and (ii) wastage (or the percentage of students that drop out before completing a course) and stagnation (or the extra time actually taken by a student to complete a course spread over a specified period). The examination results do show that a very large proportion of students fail in every examination which is a broad indication of the inefficiency of the system. But this measure is not helpful for comparisons over time because the percentage of passes at any given examination tends to be fairly constant. Moreover, even in respect of the students that pass the examination, it is not possible to isolate the contribution of the educational system from such factors as student motivation, home environment, private

tuition, or even bazar guides. Wastage and stagnation provide better indices. But we do not have flow statistics or special studies which can give a better indication of the reality. Data on indicators such as morale of the teachers and students, full utilization of existing facilities, and administrative or financial efficiency are not available, and when available some of them are not easy to quantify. Under these circumstances, judgements regarding the efficiency of the system can have only a limited objectivity. In spite of these limitations, there can be no hesitation in asserting that the education system is very inefficient and wasteful. At all stages, the rates of wastage are fairly high, and probably the highest is at the elementary stage. There is a large proportion of failures at every examination; and what is worse, such large proportions of failures seem to be built into the system as an inevitable component. The utilization of the existing facilities, whether buildings or equipment, is woefully inadequate. The number of days on which the educational institutions work or the limited time for which they function on working days shows that we use our existing facilities for only a small fraction of their total potential. Most of our courses do not stretch the students to the maximum and many a student is able to pass his annual examinations by a preparation spreading over two or three months. We do not insist on maintenance of standards in individual institutions; and the system seems to have infinite tolerance for incompetence at the institutional level. The staggering inefficiency of the system is so patent that there is hardly any need to argue out the case in detail; and there is also some evidence to show that even this little efficiency has been going down in recent years due to several factors such as political interference which often results in weakening the morale of the educational administrators and teachers, increase in the size of the system which has almost made it unmanageable, student unrest, and trade unionism among teachers. Consequently, we have not been able to cope with the double task of managing the rapid expansion that is taking place (which is quite a job in itself) side by side with an accent on qualitative improvement (which is an even tougher assignment). What is worse, even the routine day-to-day administration is breaking down in many areas. For instance, very little has been achieved in examination reform. But the negative effects

6. See paras 2.43 to 2.45 of the *Report of the Education Commission*.

of such failures as the inability to hold examinations and declare results in time (in some cases, the holding of examinations has been in arrears for even two or more years), mass malpractices by students, leakage of question papers, or corruption by teachers have been so great that many of our celebrated external examinations have been almost reduced to a farce. The incidents of student unrest result in closure of institutions for long periods and their protests against 'stiff' papers or demands for 'grace' marks do not have a healthy effect on standards. Teacher truancy is on the increase at all stages; the education departments are often unable to maintain discipline or to inspect schools for years on end. If these trends are not controlled in time, there is every danger that the entire system may collapse.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN EFFORTS

The overall picture in regard to standards and efficiency is, therefore, far from happy. If the quality of education is to be improved, our efforts will have to be concentrated not only on redesigning the system in terms of goals, processes, value system, and content on the broad lines discussed earlier, but also on improving its performance which has a very important role in the overall improvement of quality in education. The Education Commission (1964-66), therefore, laid great emphasis on the programmes which would help us to improve standards and to raise the efficiency of the system. While recognizing that monetary inputs were needed and that public investment in programmes of qualitative improvement would have to be stepped up substantially in the years ahead, the Commission also emphasized the view that in programmes to be developed for the qualitative improvement of education, non-monetary inputs such as careful planning and human effort were of even greater importance and that, without them, no monetary inputs, however large, would have the desired results. The far-reaching recommendations made by the Commission on this subject include :

(i) The organization of a nation-wide programme of educational development which would involve *every* educational institution and *all* human factors connected with it – its teachers, students, and local community;

(ii) the adoption of a system of institutional planning with the object of implementing programmes of qualitative improvement which need human effort rather than additional financial investment (such as reduction in stagnation and wastage, improvement of teaching methods, assistance to retarded students, special attention to gifted students, enrichment of curricula, examination reform, and so on);

(iii) making the educational system elastic and dynamic by providing full encouragement for freedom, initiative, and experimentation on the part of schools and teachers;

(iv) development of selective institutions to optimum levels so that they act as pace-setters and help improve standards all around;

(v) introducing a system of school complexes or of cooperative effort for improvement of standards in which the universities will help the colleges, the colleges will help the secondary schools in their neighbourhood, and the secondary schools will help the elementary schools in their neighbourhood through extension services, training of personnel, and sharing of facilities;

(vi) full utilization of all existing facilities of educational institutions in terms of land, buildings, equipment, and personnel; and

(vii) creation of a climate of dedicated and sustained hard work in all educational institutions.⁷

It would be difficult to conceive of a better programme for qualitative improvement, especially in a situation where monetary resources are not adequately available. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to implement these recommendations. The programmes of institutional planning and school complexes have made only a small beginning in some areas. There has, however, been no movement on a nation-wide basis to transform and improve the educational system, and it is a matter of regret that a general climate of frustration and cynicism is spreading everywhere. It has also not been possible to provide the needed leadership and to enthuse the teachers and the students. The teachers who are increasingly dominated by trade unionism and economism have not risen to the challenge; and the students have not responded because of the mounting

7. For details of the recommendations, see Appendix II.

discontent in them on account of rising unemployment and its exploitation for political purposes. How and when the breakthrough will come in this situation is anybody's guess.



CHAPTER THREE

Quantity

THE PROBLEMS OF EQUALITY AND QUANTITY ARE interrelated. Man is distinguished from other animals by his infinite educability; and hence education is as vital for the intellectual, emotional, cultural, and spiritual development of man as food is for his physical survival. The principle of equality, therefore, demands that facilities and opportunities for education should be expanded as largely as possible so that each individual can absorb all the education that suits his needs, capacities, and aspirations. If, for any reason, it becomes impossible to provide all the educational facilities needed, the same principles of equality also demand that every individual should have equal access to all available facilities. All educational systems are, thus, required to answer the following three questions relating to the quantitative aspects of education :

- ↳ who shall be educated ?
- ↳ when ? (i.e., at what stage of their life); and
- ↳ how ? (i.e., in the formal or non-formal system or in a combination of both).

It is these important problems that we shall discuss in this chapter.

The Goals in Expansion of Educational Facilities (1813-1973)

Three main issues are relevant in this evaluation of the quantitative aspects of Indian education : (1) what have been our policies, over the past 160 years, about expansion of educational facilities? (2) what have been the advantages and disadvantages of these policies? and (3) what has been the measure of our success or failure in implementing them?

On the first issue, it may be pointed out that the British administrators generally placed the highest emphasis on quality and followed a restrictive policy in quantity, with little attempt at

equality. Since 1921, our emphasis has been, first and foremost, on the expansion of educational facilities which, in our view, leads to equality in the long run. We have generally underemphasized quality and have not hesitated to dilute it, if necessary, to secure rapid expansion. Within this broad framework, our enrolment policies at the different stages of education have been as under :

1. In elementary education, the British administrators emphasized voluntary expansion only. We have accepted the target of providing universal education in the age group 6-14.

2. In secondary and higher education, the British administrators generally adopted a restrictive policy, especially after 1900 when they realized that the spread of this education was leading to the nationalist upsurge. On the other hand, we have placed the highest emphasis on the expansion of secondary and higher education and refused to accept any regulation of enrolments or to introduce selective admissions.

3. The British administrators underemphasized professional and vocational education. Since 1947, we have laid the highest emphasis on the training of high-level scientific manpower and on higher education in agriculture, engineering, and medicine. Vocational education at the school stage, however, still continues to be neglected.

4. The need to make special efforts to spread education among women and the weaker sections of the community such as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes has been accepted; and fairly vigorous efforts have been made to this end since 1921 and especially since 1947.

On the second issue, viz., the correctness or otherwise of these policies, it must be admitted that they have come in for severe criticism on several grounds. One view is that our quantitative goals, even at their best, are conservative and limited. It has been argued, for instance, that universal education in the age group 6-14 is hardly adequate in the highly competitive modern world when the developed societies have made not only elementary but even secondary education universal, are spreading higher education rapidly, and have already begun to talk of making even post-secondary education universal or of providing life-long education for all. It has, therefore, been suggested that we should provide, by the end of the century, universal

education for ten years (Classes I-X) at least. Another criticism relates to pre-school education whose significance is now being increasingly recognized and, consequently, there is a growing demand for its development on an adequate scale. Similar criticism is levelled against our continued neglect of vocational education at the school stage. But, above all, the neglect of adult and non-formal education (and especially of the education of workers) has come in for severe adverse comments; and it has been suggested that we should have stressed them and tried to create an educational system which would

- ↳ enable those who have not completed a stage of education to complete it and, if they wish, to proceed to the next;
- ↳ help every educated person to have further education with or without formally enrolling himself in an educational institution;
- ↳ enable a worker to acquire knowledge, ability, and vocational skill in order to be a better worker and to improve his chances of earning more; and
- ↳ help to refresh the knowledge of the educated person and enable him to keep pace with the new knowledge in the field of his interest.

Programmes of this type, it is said, "smoothen the transition from school to life, reduce the cost of education to the State, and bring under the influence of the educational system a large number of persons who desire to educate themselves but cannot do so on economic grounds".¹

Expansion of Educational Facilities (1813-1973)

In spite of all the emphasis we have placed on quantity in the past 54 years, it is a matter for regret that we have not been able to achieve even these limited goals.

In this context, it will be interesting to examine the statistics of educational institutions and enrolments covering the past 120 years given in Appendix IV. For convenience, this period has been divided into five sub-periods, each of which shows an

1. *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66)*, para 2.54.

accelerating tempo of expansion. Very little expansion was achieved in the first phase (1813-1955) because most of this early period was spent in controversies over the goals, methods, content, and organization of the new education system. All these were finally decided by the Wood's Education Despatch (1854) and real expansion started with the creation of the education departments (1855) and the establishment of universities (1857). The second phase (1855-1901) saw steady growth of education at all stages, especially because of the liberal recommendations of the Indian Education Commission (1882). The third phase (1901-1921) was one of good public awakening due to the struggle for freedom. This led to considerable expansion, although the government tried its best, for political reasons, to restrict the spread of secondary and higher education. The fourth phase (1921-1947) is significant, partly for the transfer of education to limited Indian control and partly for the greater public awakening due to the intensification of the fight for political freedom. Consequently, it shows a more rapid expansion than in the earlier phase. The fifth phase (1947-1974) has naturally witnessed unprecedented and phenomenal growth because the spread of education now received full support from the government and there was also a very great awakening among the public.

If one compares the situation in 1855-56 with that in 1973-74, one finds an expansion of a fantastic order. Even a comparison of the present situation with that in 1921 or even in 1947 leads almost to the same conclusion, and one realizes the great advances we have made in the past, and especially in the post-independence period. But if one were to compare the present situation with even our present goals (to say nothing of the targets we ought to have kept before ourselves and reached), one finds that we still have 'miles to go' before we can heave a sigh of satisfaction. This is true, not only of education as a whole, but also of most of its sectors. In three of them, viz., (i) elementary education, (ii) secondary and higher education, and (iii) professional and vocational education, there have been considerable gains as well as losses. There have been very significant achievements in two sectors, viz., (i) education of women and (ii) education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, although the tasks not done are still vast. Three other important

sectors, viz. (i) pre-school education, (ii) adult education, and (iii) non-formal education, still continue to be sadly neglected.

SECTORS IN WHICH THERE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLE GAINS AS WELL AS LOSSES

As stated earlier, three important sectors fall within this category.

1. *Elementary Education* : It was pointed out in Chapter 1 that the British administration had no plans for mass education and refused even to accept the concept of compulsory education. It did, however, strive to spread elementary education among the people on a voluntary basis. Between 1855 and 1871, local cesses were levied on land revenue, one of the most important tax sources of the government at the time, and they were partly utilized to help the spread of elementary education. The emphasis on this stage increased further with the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission (1882) and especially with the new policy Curzon initiated in 1904 and the special Central grants sanctioned for the purpose. But, in spite of all these efforts, the actual achievements were comparatively very limited. In 1921, the total enrolments at the primary and middle school stages were only 6.9 million (or 18.6 per cent of the age group 6-11) and only 435,000 (or 2.2 per cent of the age group 11-14) respectively.

Indian nationalist opinion, however, was committed to provide universal elementary education to every child. More vigorous steps began, therefore, to be taken, after 1921, for the expansion of educational facilities at this stage. But for various reasons, only limited results were achieved till 1947, when only one child out of three in the age group 6-11 and only one out of the eleven in the age group 11-14 had been enrolled. During the past 28 years, the progress has been extremely rapid and our enrolments have now reached 64 million (or 86 per cent in the age group 6-11) and 15 million (or 36 per cent in the age group 11-14). While the expansion of facilities actually achieved is indeed commendable, we are obviously still far from the goal of universal education laid down in the Constitution.

2. *Secondary and Higher Education* : In the early years the British administrators placed great emphasis on secondary

education because its object was to teach the English language and on higher education because it was a vehicle for the spread of European knowledge. In the early years (1813-1854), the spread of secondary and higher education was mainly done by the missionaries through their private institutions and by the government through its own schools. The emphasis was, however, increasingly shifted to the latter after the creation of the State education departments in 1855. The Indian Education Commission (1882) reversed this policy and suggested that the direct enterprise of government in secondary and higher education should be restricted to the maintenance of a few institutions (which would serve as models) and that Indian private enterprise should be liberally encouraged to spread secondary and higher education. This gave a tremendous boost to the spread of secondary and higher education because the new emerging classes saw the advantages of this education and spared no efforts to provide themselves with it.

By 1900, the government had been disillusioned and realized that the new classes which were being created by secondary and higher education did not and would not remain loyal and grateful and that they were likely to create a national upsurge which might end the British rule. Curzon, therefore, initiated a new policy of controlling the expansion of secondary and higher education through the prescription and enforcement of strict conditions of recognition and affiliation, strengthening of the education departments, and the reform of the universities. But the tiger had already tasted blood and in spite of all the attempts at control (which only helped to improve standards), Indian private enterprise continued to expand secondary and higher education at a rate which was even faster than that in the earlier period.

During the past 54 years, and especially since 1947, we have placed the highest emphasis on the spread of secondary and higher education, refused to accept selective admissions or any curbs on enrolments, and allowed free expansion on the basis of open-door access, in both government and private institutions. Consequently, the most rapid expansion in our educational history has taken place during this period in secondary

and higher education.² It has had several advantages and, at the same time, created difficult problems of student unrest, fall in standards, and educated unemployment. The causes of this expansion, its consequences, and the methods of controlling it adequately in the years ahead have already been discussed in Chapter 1.

3. *Professional and Vocational Education* : Under the British administration, professional and vocational education was, by and large, geared to the day-to-day needs of the administration or to the demands of the empire. Medical, engineering, and veterinary education began out of the needs of the army and was later expanded for the needs of the civil administration as well. Legal education had to be organized as an adjunct to the new legal system introduced in the country while agricultural education arose out of the imperial need to boost up the production of raw materials in India. But the scale of the overall effort was limited, and it may be said that the British administrators paid the least attention to the development of professional, technical, and vocational education at the school and university stages.

The Indian view of professional and vocational education was, however, entirely different : it attached the greatest significance to the development of industry and to the promotion of technical and vocational education. Law, medicine, and teaching became important professions and hence education for them was also emphasized. Very little could, however, be achieved till 1947. On the attainment of independence, very high priority was given to the training of scientific manpower and to the development of professional and vocational education, particularly in agriculture, engineering, and medicine. The results obtained at the university stage have been outstanding. Our stock of highly trained scientific manpower (excluding engineers and technologists) which is estimated at 1.8 million (1971 census) is the third largest in the world. We have now 19 agricultural universities, about 100 agricultural colleges, and

2. There is reason to believe that the rate of expansion of undergraduate education has slowed down in the past few years. This is due partly to the adoption of the new pattern of 10+2+3 (which transfers all education before the undergraduate course to the school stage) and partly to a fall in the rate of establishment of new colleges due to paucity of funds.

a stock of high-level manpower of about 61,000 (1971 census). There are now 5 IITs, 137 engineering colleges, and 290 polytechnics. The admission capacity for the engineering diploma is 50,000 and that for the degree is 25,000. Our stock of degree-holding engineers is estimated at 185,000 and that of diploma-holders at 244,000 (1971 census). There are now nearly 100 medical colleges with an admission capacity of 12,500 (as against 15 colleges with an admission capacity of 1,200 in 1947), and our stock of doctors is estimated at 138,000 (1971 census). Unfortunately, however, vocational education at the school stage has not made satisfactory progress.

SECTORS WHERE WE HAVE MADE VERY GREAT PROGRESS ALTHOUGH WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO

One of the outstanding developments in modern Indian education, from the point of view of equality as well as of quantity is the spread of education among women and among the weaker sections such as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Although the work still to be done in these sectors is very vast, we have also every right to be proud of our achievements.

1. *The education of women* began, as may be anticipated, at the primary stage. Expansion at the secondary stage was slow to start and slow to spread, partly because it was more difficult to establish the need for teaching English to girls and partly because the age of marriage had to rise considerably to make this possible. Higher education of women began even later, and the first two girls became graduates of the Calcutta University in 1883. It may also be pointed out that the spread of education among girls and women began first in the urban areas and among the middle and the upper classes. It was slow to spread to rural areas and to the lower classes as well as to the well-to-do classes which had strong traditional resistance for sending girls to schools. Similarly, it was general education that advanced first. Girls entered vocational courses only slowly, the most popular openings being those in education and medicine. By 1921, the percentage of literacy among women had increased only to 1.8 per cent and their enrolments at all stages (except elementary) were unimpressive.

The spread of education among girls and women has received

a great fillip since 1921, mainly because of the public awakening created by the struggle for freedom and the participation of women in it. But even greater impetus was given to it after the attainment of independence so that the expansion of the education of girls and women between 1921 and 1974 has been unprecedented and phenomenal.³ On the other side of the picture, it may be pointed out that the enrolment of girls is still much less than what one would like to have and that the gap between it and the enrolment of boys is still wide at all stages and increases as one goes up the educational ladder because the rate of drop-out among girls is much higher than that among boys. We cannot also ignore the fact that the largest beneficiaries of all this expansion are again the well-to-do classes and that the women from the poorer social groups have received little benefit from this programme so far.

2. *The education of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes* did not make much progress till 1921. The first great fillip to the programme was given by Mahatma Gandhi who launched a nation-wide intensive movement for the abolition of untouchability and also for improving the condition of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It was because of his leadership that the nation became committed to spread education among these deprived social groups. Major steps in these directions were taken by the Congress governments which first came to power in 1937; and the programme was developed in a fairly big way after the attainment of independence. It must also be emphasized that the programme receives considerable support because of the decision to reserve posts under the government and seats in all legislatures for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

If one were to take into consideration the present enrolments of Scheduled Castes and Tribes at all stages of education, whether in absolute figures or as a percentage of the population, it becomes at once evident that there is an immense improvement over the situation in 1921 or even in 1947. But there is also no doubt that the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have still a very long way to go to level up with the other communities.

3. For details, see Appendix IV.

SECTORS WHICH STILL CONTINUE TO BE SADLY NEGLECTED

A few words may also be said about important sectors of education that continue to be sadly neglected even to this day.

1. The first is *pre-school education*, interest in which began to grow after 1921, and especially after 1947. A large number of pre-schools have since come to be established in all parts of the country. The bulk of these are, however, in the urban areas. Most of them are private and fee-supported and cater to the needs of the well-to-do educated families who have come to appreciate the advantages of pre-school education. Some teach through the English medium and charge fantastic fees. Since the First Plan, the government has started a number of Balwadis in the rural areas (and also for the urban poor) under the Central Social Welfare Board and the Community Development Programme. These are free and meet the needs of the deprived social groups. But, unfortunately, their number is very small in comparison with the needs. It has been estimated that, at present, the total number of children attending all categories of preschools is about one million or two per cent of the total population of the age group 3-5.⁴

2. The second is the programme of adult education, including the *liquidation of adult illiteracy*. This has not received the priority it deserves, either under British administration or after the transfer of education to Indian control or even after independence. We make less than a million adults literate every year and the expenditure on adult education is less than one per cent of the total educational expenditure. The percentage of literacy in the age group above 14 years where every one ought to be literate was only 33 (1971 census).⁵ As the growth of literacy is not even keeping pace with the growth of population, the number of adult illiterates is increasing every year. There is also no worthwhile programme of adult education as such which would involve the people as a whole creatively in programmes of national development.

3. *Non-formal education* is yet another sector which

continues to be sadly neglected although a few programmes have been taken up after the attainment of independence. The agricultural extension services which strive to upgrade the skills of the practising agriculturists or the family planning programme are two important instances of large-scale programmes of this type. There is also a limited programme for the education of workers in the organized sector. The radio and the film have become very common, although the first is not used as fully for educational purposes as it could be and the second is more used for mis-education or opiation than for education or conscientization. The TV is just coming in but the possibilities of its use for worthwhile non-formal education of the masses do not seem to be bright. The press and the libraries have developed as important agencies of education; but they still have a limited effectiveness because of mass illiteracy. While the limited gains arising from the increased use of mass media or the implementation of development programmes in agriculture or health are important, they do not at all compensate for the greatest weakness of the system, viz., the failure to develop a massive programme of non-formal education for adults and non-student youth in the age group 15-25 based on literacy, numeracy, tech-niracy, upgrading of vocational skills, involvement in developmental programmes, and good political education.

It would be evident from the foregoing discussion that even in respect of the quantitative expansion of education – and this is an aspect of education on which we have laid the highest emphasis and in which we have made the most rapid progress – we still have a very long way to go by any standards and have not realized even the limited goals we have set before ourselves. We have achieved good results in the expansion of general secondary and higher education in the training of high-level scientific manpower, in the development of professional education in agriculture, education, engineering, law, and medicine, and in promoting education of women and Scheduled Castes and Tribes. On the other hand, our failures are far too glaring. The illiteracy of the masses is a national disgrace and the absence of effective programmes of adult education is the biggest handicap to progress. The importance of the pre-school stage is now recognized all over the world. But in this sector we have made very little progress and our services reach only two per cent of

4. Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, *Report of the Study Group on the Development of the Pre-School Child*, New Delhi, 1972.

5. For detailed statistics of literacy, see Appendix IV.

the age group.... We have not yet been able to provide universal education to all children in the age group 6-14 as required by the Constitution. All the emphasis we placed on secondary and higher education during the past 54 years has resulted in the provision of post-elementary education to only about 10 per cent of the youth in the age group 15-25. Most of the remaining 90 per cent of the young persons have hardly any access to education. In fact, it appears that we have fallen between almost all stools.

The concentration of effort on the expansion of secondary and higher education on the basis of open-door admissions has created difficult problems of educated unemployment and adversely affected quality. Quality has also been adversely affected at other stages as well because our emphasis on expansion often goes hand in hand with dilution of standards. The pursuit of equality has also been adversely affected by the neglect of the programmes of mass education as well as by the overemphasis on secondary and higher education. After all these losses, we also find that quantity – the basic goal for which all those sacrifices were made – has also been largely unrealized. What is even worse, we will not be able to maintain even the present rates of expansion. We are already spending about Rs. 16,000 million on education (which is next only to the expenditure on defence) and we are unable to find large additional resources because of the difficult economic situation and the demands from other competing sectors such as agriculture, irrigation, power, industry, or family planning. Meanwhile, the cost per student has also increased considerably. The earlier rates of expansion have, therefore, been cut down and we find ourselves in the unenviable position of a traveller who discovers that, even when he is less than half-way to his distant destination, his purse has been stolen and his car has developed serious engine trouble. It may, therefore, take us years to realize even the existing limited goals; and there is just no question of setting up wider goals for expansion of educational facilities (e.g., provision of lifelong education) for which the developed nations are now preparing themselves.

The Basic Cause of the Failure : The Traditional System of Formal Education

Why is it that our efforts at quantitative expansion of educational facilities have failed so miserably? Part of the failure is, of course, due to the wrong policies and priorities we adopted : we did not, for instance, give adequate priority to programmes of adult education, of universalizing elementary education, or of vocationalizing secondary education, and we were also not justified in according the highest priority to the free expansion of general, secondary, and higher education on an open-door basis of admissions. But the largest part of our failure is due to the wrong model of the education system we adopted, viz., the traditional formal system of single-point entry, sequential annual promotions from class to class, and full-time instruction by full-time professional teachers. It was shown in Chapter 1 (and Appendix I) that it has prevented us from providing universal elementary education for all children in the age group 6-14. It is also easy to see that so long as we continue to rely almost exclusively on this model, all workers – whether children, youth, or adults – will continue to remain outside its scope. The model also misfires for financial reasons. The cost per student is necessarily high in this model which assumes that education will be provided almost exclusively by full-time professional teachers. As time passes, teachers demand and get higher remuneration. On grounds of quality, they demand smaller classes or lower pupil-teacher ratio and generally manage to get them. The other costs of education also tend to increase, partly because of inflation and partly because of a continuous sophistication which is built into the system. Consequently, the cost per student always continues to escalate in a system of this type; and a stage has now been reached when even the most affluent countries are convinced that they will not be able to provide adequate education to the people unless they abandon their exclusive dependence on the formal system of education. The conclusion becomes inescapable in all poor and developing countries.

There are also several other reasons for which enlightened public opinion all the world over is now entirely opposed to the exclusive dominance of the traditional system of formal education. For instance, it has been well established that the

system is more in favour of the *status quo* than social change, that existing vested interests always exploit it to strengthen and perpetuate their own privileged position, and that it encourages conformity rather than promote healthy dissent. The system is, therefore, extremely unsuitable for a country like India which desires to change its traditional and inequitable social order.

What is even more important, several basic assumptions of this system are now being challenged on sound academic considerations and especially because they have become obsolete in view of the fact that a knowledge explosion is taking place in the world, and that societies are changing kaleidoscopically in consequence. These developments obviously imply that one of the major objectives of the education system should now be to give *every individual continuing access to the growing knowledge in the world and to enable him adjust himself to the rapidly changing society around him or, in other words, to create a system of life-long education for all*. This is now becoming the goal, in quantitative educational terms, of all progressive societies, and a little reflection will show that it is incompatible with the continuance of the traditional system of formal education.

It may be pointed out, for instance, that the traditional system of formal education with its single-point entry (which necessarily implies that once you step off the system, it is not easy to come back to it) has been organized on the assumption that the education of an individual is a one-shot affair meant for his childhood and youth. This is wrong in principle because it divides life into two main water-tight periods of (*i*) all education and no work and (*ii*) no education and all work. It is also counter-productive because it requires that the phenomenon of exploding knowledge should be met by lengthening the duration of full-time schooling. This never works because there are severe financial and practical limits to the extent to which the period full-time schooling can be extended for all persons. If every individual is to be given full access to the growing knowledge in the world and enabled to adjust himself to the rapid social changes taking place around him, there is no alternative but to abandon this concept of education as a one-shot affair, and to look upon it as a process which should continue throughout one's life.

Another assumption of the traditional system of formal edu-

cation which conflicts with the concept of life-long education is that there is a dichotomy between education and work so that one must do either one or the other, but not both. This is wrong in theory and harmful in practice. Work and education are not irreconcilable opposites. Work is a vehicle for education and education is a tool for improving the efficiency and joy of work. They are, therefore, complementary and may even be regarded as the two sides of the same coin. In a well organized society, both of them should continue to influence one's life from the beginning to the end; and we must deliberately include an element of work-experience in the education one receives in infancy, childhood, and youth just as, throughout adulthood, we must deliberately plan for an element of education to be blended with work in a suitable fashion.

Yet another assumption of the traditional system of formal education which is also at variance with the wider concept of life-long education is that it recognizes only full-time education and ignores the two alternative channels of part-time education and private study or own-time education. This excludes all workers from the system; and that is why the Education Commission (1964-66) recommended that these two alternative channels should be developed on a large scale at every stage and in every sector of education and that they should be given the same status as full-time education. Unless this is done, it will not be possible to emphasize the education of workers or adult and continuing education which has assumed the highest significance in contemporary societies.

The traditional formal system of education also emphasizes teaching (which means helping someone else learn) rather than learning (which means self-education). It must be remembered that the most valuable gift of man is his capacity to learn by himself or through interaction with nature and society. It is this which enables him to know himself, to understand his environment, to interact properly with other human beings, and to exercise his rights or to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the society – local, national, or international. The learning process is also continuous from birth to death as the individual is continually influenced by all that he does and by all that impinges on his consciousness. In fact, learning is a continuous by-product of living itself. Learning is also an

exclusively personalized activity in the sense that every individual has to learn by himself. All that other agencies, tools, and individuals can do is to assist him learn, directly or indirectly. But the quantum, kind, and quality of learning depends essentially on the individual himself and on his abilities and efforts, rather than on education or the external interventions whose objective is to help him learn. It is unfortunate that these external interventions tend to be overemphasized at present, partly because the objective of the consumption-oriented society is to convert an individual into a consumer of goods and services and partly because of the professional vested interests of teachers. But in the new society with its devaluation of mere consumption and its emphasis on individual autonomy, freedom, and self-reliance, this unfortunately trend will have to be corrected, and it is learning that will have to be given its due emphasis. This necessarily implies radical changes in the formal education system which emphasizes teaching.

The traditional system of formal education is also based on the assumption that learning is essentially a 'school' process or that it takes place in the school only. This is not factually correct. Learning takes place everywhere in society, and, in fact, the learning which occurs outside the school is quantitatively much larger and often far more significant. Learning is essentially a 'social' rather than a school process. It, therefore, follows that, while the formal school has a useful role to play in education, a properly organized educational system must take into account all learning that takes place outside the school and coordinate it with the school programmes.

Linked up with this is another erroneous assumption of the formal system which depends exclusively upon professional teachers to impart education, viz., that education is *not* a direct responsibility of society and that the society can discharge its responsibility for education by delegating the work to professional teachers. It is true that professional teachers are needed and they have a role to play. But extreme professionalization where teachers get a monopoly of teaching is undesirable for several reasons. To begin with, professionalization makes education costlier (and, therefore, rarer) so that, in trying to provide education for all, we inevitably end by denying the right to learn to large groups of individuals or at least discriminate against

the right of large social groups to learn. Secondly, professionalization polarizes the dichotomy between teachers and students so that teachers cease to be students and students do not get an opportunity to teach. What is needed is a system in which this polarization disappears and teachers become senior students (who also teach) and students become junior teachers (who also learn). Thirdly, extreme professionalization implies that the immense teaching resources available in the community remain unused : a proper utilization of these resources will lead both to economy and to increased effectiveness. Finally, it needs to be emphasized that teaching is only a different and a better method of learning and that every individual can and should contribute to the total process of learning by personal participation as a teacher. It is thus highly desirable that the education (teaching or learning) process should cease to be the responsibility of a few paid professionals : it should be a direct social process in which every individual should be involved both as a learner and as a teacher, on a part-time or a full-time basis according to the needs of the situation.⁶

The foregoing discussion leads to two major conclusions. The first is that the quantitative educational goals which we have now adopted are conservative and limited and that they need to be widened to meet the requirements of modern societies. Secondly, it is also obvious that the traditional system of formal education has so many inherent weaknesses that it cannot deliver the goods in regard to even the conservative and limited goals we have adopted at present, to say nothing of the wider and more progressive goals we ought to set up in the future. We must, therefore, simultaneously try to create a new educational system which will be in keeping with the new society we desire to create and the new educational goals we desire to adopt.

6. It may also be pointed out that these two factors, viz., (1) education as a social rather than a school process and (2) education as a direct social rather than a delegated professional responsibility, are interdependent. The objective of utilizing all learning, whether acquired inside the school or outside of it, can be realized only if we also utilize simultaneously all the teaching resources in the community, not only those of full-time paid professionals, but also of part-time volunteers and workers. The converse of this also is true in the sense that unless we involve every individual both as a student and as a teacher, we will not be able to generate the bulk of social learning which is outside the school.

The New Goal : A Learning Society

What is the new goal, in quantitative educational terms, which a modern society can set before itself? It may briefly be described as the creation of a *learning society* in which every individual will learn as well as teach throughout his life. In such a society opportunities and facilities for learning will be made abundantly available and easily accessible to all individuals; the minimum needs of existence will be assured to each individual so that he has adequate leisure to pursue the higher goals of life such as learning; the motivation of individuals to learn will be kept alive through social development and involvement of every one in the development process; and every individual would be trained to engage himself in learning something or the other throughout his life and also in teaching or sharing with others whatever he has learned. It is only such a society that can meet the challenge of the modern world in which knowledge is exploding and kaleidoscopic social changes are taking place. The learning society would thus be far ahead of the contemporary societies in which, in spite of all the progress made, large groups of people still suffer from severe limitations on their right to learn.

The goal of life-long learning, it may be pointed out, is not new : it has been laid down as a supreme value in several ancient societies and in every age and country, but has been actually attained only by a few. But the novelty of the present concept is that it raises the issue from the individual to the social level. We expect life-long learning to be practised by all. This involves several radical changes which show that, in adopting this goal, we are not going back to the past, but far ahead into the future. For instance, in ancient India, a Brahman was defined as a person who continued to study throughout his life and who also engaged himself continually in teaching what he had learnt.⁷ In the modern societies, we will need two major changes in these ideas. The first is that this goal, which was visualized in the past at the level of an individual and practised by only a few, should now be visualized at the level of the society and practised by all

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7. A Brahman was defined as one who studies throughout his life (यावज्जीवमधीते स विष्णुः) and learning (अध्ययन) and teaching (अध्यापन) were the two main duties of every Brahman.

individuals. Secondly, the Brahman of the past did not work or produce wealth : he left that task to the *Shudras* who worked but did not learn. With our emphasis on equality, we cannot accept a society in which some will work and others will lead a parasitic life, or that only a few will be Brahmins and the rest will be Shudras. In the new society we look forward to, therefore, every one must be a worker and a Brahman – he must be a producer, continue to learn all through his life, and teach others what he has learned. It is the learning society which creates this opportunity for each one of its members.

### **The Right to Learn**

The learning society which we desire to create, therefore, assumes that every individual shall have, and shall be able to effectively exercise, the right to learn throughout his life.

It needs to be noted that this right to learn has both positive and negative aspects. In a learning society, the state must take the following steps to support the right of every individual to learn :

1. to provide every individual with that minimum of education which will awaken his curiosity, build up his self-study habits, and enable him to be a life-long student;
2. to create such social conditions that every individual shall be effectively motivated to keep learning;
3. to provide the necessary infrastructure and individual support so that every individual will be able to exercise this right as widely as possible at all periods of his life and that, in so doing, he will have an equality of opportunity with every one else.

Similarly, the state will have to take the necessary steps to ensure that the right of every individual to learn is not adversely affected either by social action (or failure) or by actions of other individuals. Strange as it may seem, there are several instances where the right to learn is denied because the right to education is provided under certain conditions which are discriminatory. For instance, in the present system of formal elementary education which we have evolved and where children must attend on a full-time basis, the children from the poor families who are compelled to work at home or outside of it and cannot attend schools on a whole-time basis are literally denied the right to

learn. A similar discrimination is practised when the *right to qualify* is restricted only to full-time students in the formal system. For instance, in a system where admissions to the university are made on the basis of selection and private candidates are not allowed to appear for entrance examinations, the right to learn is denied to those who are not fortunate enough to get admitted to the formal system for no fault of theirs. Yet another form of discrimination is when an individual who learns on his own is not given the same status as another who has studied in the formal system in spite of the fact that his performance may actually be equal or even superior to that of the other. We must ban all such discriminations against the individual's right to learn.

### ***The New Education System***

It will not be possible to guarantee the right to learn throughout his life to every individual unless we create a new educational system which will be an integrated blend of the formal and the non-formal sectors. The proposal that the non-formal sector (which has been neglected in the past) should now be adequately emphasized to counteract the inherent weaknesses and contradictions of the formal education system finds ready acceptance. But the implementation of the reform is often attempted on wrong lines. For instance, an attempt is often made to superimpose non-formal education on the system of formal education (which remains unchanged) so that the two continue to exist side by side. Perhaps a rich country can afford to have the resources for such a double programme. But in poor countries, all that happens is that non-formal education gets a small allocation after the needs of formal education have been met, and fails to make any dent on the situation. In some cases, even non-formal education gets as rigid and bureaucratic as the formal system of education itself with all its emphasis on professionalization so that we do not get the best results from it. Perhaps the greatest difficulties are encountered when non-formal education is to be given a status equal to that of formal education or the products of the non-formal system are to be given an equality of economic or job opportunity. While one welcomes the rekindled interest in non-formal education, one does not at

all feel happy about the utility of running formal and non-formal education as separate concurrent streams (which run parallel and criss-cross with each other only occasionally) without making an attempt to solve the basic issues involved.

What is needed in fact is to break away from the rigidity of the traditional formal system of education and to organize a new, elastic, and dynamic system of education which will meet the needs of a learning society. A mere negative step such as 'de-schooling' or even positive steps such as a transformation limited to the formal education system or the simultaneous development of a large-scale but separate non-formal sector will not be able to confer the right to learn on every individual or to make life-long learning possible for all. We must really organize a new education system in which the formal and the non-formal elements will be blended in an appropriate fashion. This system should provide a certain minimum general education to every individual which will introduce him to the great cultural traditions and acquisitions of knowledge which mankind has made and build up sufficiently strong and deep-rooted self-study habits so that he becomes a life-long student. Beyond this level of general education, the system should provide a large infrastructure which will provide ample opportunities to every individual to exercise his right to learn throughout his life. Both the programmes of the minimum general education for all and the voluntary education beyond it must be based on an integrated blend of formal and non-formal sectors and use all available community resources.

### ***A Historical and International Perspective***

The significance of the main proposal made here, viz., the creation of a new system which will be an integrated blend of the formal and non-formal sectors, can be realized in all its aspects, if we examine them in the international and the historical perspectives.

The answers given to the three basic questions posed at the beginning of this chapter – who shall be educated, when, and how – have varied from time to time and from society to society, depending upon the stage of its development (primitive, feudal, or modern industrial), the extent and level of specialization, the

total quantum of knowledge available and its rate of growth, the nature of the education system (i.e., formal or non-formal), and its basic value premises (egalitarian or hierarchical).

In the primitive tribal societies which were, by and large, egalitarian, 'formal' education, as we now know it, was unknown and the only education which an individual received was 'non-formal' which took place in one's communion with nature, at home, in society, or at the work place. In such societies, education (which means any activity which helps an individual learn) began in the home where the adult members took upon themselves the responsibility to socialize the child and under whose guidance, he learned some of the most important and basic things in life. A little later, when he began to participate in the wider milieu outside the home, society took a hand in the game and began to influence the learning of the individual in a variety of ways through its institutions, processes, and activities. Every individual, thus received, through the joint efforts of the home and the society, all the education necessary to enable him to play his assigned role as a member of the community. What was even more important, these societies expected every individual to become a teacher also and gave him an opportunity to teach what he knew. For instance, every daughter learned the home-craft from her mother and taught it to her daughter; every father taught his skills to his son who, in his turn, passed them on to his children : and so on. It was, thus, a system of simple but life-long non-formal education in which every individual functioned both as a student and as a teacher. Its main weakness was the lack of specialization which resulted in a very limited total stock of knowledge which grew at a snail's pace. This inevitably led to social stagnation as well.

The situation, however, changed considerably when the social organization became more complex, the total stock of knowledge as well as its rate of growth increased, the need for specialization began to be felt, and, inevitably, the societies also began to be hierarchical and stratified. It was at this stage of development that societies began to organize 'formal' systems of education for certain categories of knowledge with *full-time* students and *full-time* professional teachers. By its very definition, this system was not universal but restrictive in character so that questions relating to the coverage of the formal system of

education – who shall be educated therein and how long – began to assume some significance. But for reasons already discussed, they did not assume any major significance.<sup>8</sup>

This process which began in the ancient period and grew slowly in the mediaeval period, has now reached its highest point as it were in the industrialized societies of the modern period. In the contemporary societies, specialization and the total stock of knowledge, which mutually support each other, is growing at a fantastic pace. Social life has also become increasingly based on knowledge so that preservation and dissemination of knowledge, its use in solving social problems, and the acquisition of new knowledge become social tasks of the highest significance. These societies have, therefore, deliberately created huge formal systems of education and invested immense resources in them. They have also created, for these systems, very large cadres of trained specialists who have now become a privileged and significant group because of their size and scale of remuneration. As the privileges attached to the students of the system begin to grow and the concepts of equality begin to spread, the pressures for expanding the system also increase. Consequently, the education systems of the highly industrialized societies have now become enormous and extremely complex.

The formal educational system is, thus, a concomitant of industrial development with all its emphasis on growth of knowledge, specializations, and professionalization which helped the system to grow by leaps and bounds. The process was also helped by the fact that industrialization created, on the one hand, millions of children and youth who could not be employed in its complex production processes (and hence could be sent to schools on a whole-time basis) and, on the other, the immense financial and human resources which the system needed. Just as the two decades following the Second World War (1945-1965) were the most favourable for industrial development, they can also be described as the golden age of the formal education systems. During this period, the developed countries showed an unreserved and boundless faith in the formal school system, so that the popular demand for its expansion grew at a terrific speed. Those who had never been to school began to enter its

8. See Introduction.

portals in large numbers and those that entered tried to stay a little longer. There was, thus, a virtual explosion of enrolments in schools at all stages. The educational process also became more sophisticated and complex so that there was a continuous increase in the cost per student, both recurring and capital. The national governments, as convinced of the value of the school system as the people themselves, invested large amounts in its expansion and improvement on a priority basis (the rise in educational expenditures in most countries was twice the growth of GNP or even more), and not only met the social demand for schooling but also took active measures to fan the demand itself. The teaching community, the priest-classes of this new religion and its principal beneficiary, helped to maintain and to continually deepen the public faith in the school system through 'research' which conclusively established its beneficial results and justified all the sacrifices made for it in the name of human resource development. If any weaknesses in the system were noticed – they were so glaring that few could fail to notice them – the same 'research' could establish equally conclusively that the only cure to the obvious ills of the system was to provide more schooling; and if that was not enough, all that was needed was to inject a stronger and stiffer dose of better schooling. The net result of all these developments was to make the public education system – a state-owned industry – the largest and the most prosperous public enterprise of the modern world. The developing countries readily caught the same fever, especially because they believed that modernization, industrialization, and wealth of the developed countries (the attributes they most desired to imitate) were the direct consequence of their education systems (rather than the other way round) and imported these models in the belief that they had only to Westernize their educational systems to modernize their society and to become industrialized and rich. Both this belief and their efforts to act thereon received tremendous support through organizations such as the UNESCO, through international aid, and through the large and continuous stream of experts who flew in and out from the developing countries. The unprecedented growth of the public education systems during these two decades, thus, became a truly global phenomenon.

The going was too good to have lasted long; and disenchant-

ment started about a decade ago. Characteristically enough, it was the developed countries themselves (whose educational systems were, on the whole, bigger, healthier, and more efficient) that were the first to raise the alarm that all was not well with the expansion of the public education system and that its basic assumptions and structures needed a radical re-examination. This alarm was slow to spread to the developing countries in spite of the fact that the adoption of the Western model had proved to be dysfunctional in them. The economies of these poor countries were being unduly strained by increased educational expenditure, necessitated by the imported model, which deprived more important sectors of essential funds; and yet they could neither provide adequate educational facilities nor improve standards to satisfactory levels. Large proportions of their populations could not enter schools; a substantial proportion of those who did enter became drop-outs, increasing the ranks of the social outcasts; and a new social class also came into existence, the ever-increasing number of frustrated jobless secondary school and university graduates who tended to intensify social disorganization and unrest. But the alarm did reach them, though belatedly; and now, even in the developing countries, there is an explosion of critical reflection on the nature, purpose, and structure of education. The disenchantment with the traditional public system of education and the search for alternatives is, therefore, as global a phenomenon now as was its uncritical and enthusiastic acceptance in the first two decades after the Second World War.

It is interesting to remember that this disenchantment with the formal educational system almost coincides with the disenchantment with the industrial society itself, with its accent on mass production and consumerism which is leading to a variety of crises-pollution, depletion of non-renewable scarce resources, stock-piling of nuclear weapons, the widening gap between the rich and the poor countries, and the consequent social and international tensions.

What is the direction in which the contemporary industrialized societies can move in the years ahead? In economic production and broad social organization, they should not and cannot go back to the primitive tribal societies. The only hope for their salvation lies in creating a new 'post-industrial' society on the

lines which Gandhi visualized or Ivan Illich dreams of. As an inevitable corollary to such social and economic transformation, their educational transformation also will be along similar lines. It will not be possible for them to continue with the linear expansion of the existing system of formal education. Nor will they be able to go back to the purely non-formal educational systems of the primitive tribes : that would make us lose all the advantages of specialization which we should not only conserve but also expand. The only alternative before these societies, therefore, is to create a new educational system which is an integrated blend of the formal and non-formal sectors and which will help the creation of the learning society of tomorrow. Fortunately, it is precisely in this direction that international thought seems to be moving at present.

The educational developments in India have followed, by and large, a similar course. In the remote past, we had primitive tribal societies which depended exclusively on non-formal education. In ancient and mediaeval India, we developed an educational system which had a small formal sector side by side with a large non-formal sector which, however, remained isolated from one another. Between 1813 and 1921, the British administrators laid the foundation of the modern educational system which totally ignored the non-formal sector and depended exclusively on the formal system of school education. Between 1921 and 1947, we expanded the formal education system, although a little slowly because of the constraints of an alien rule. Between 1947 and 1965, we expanded the formal system, like all the other countries of the world, at a terrific pace. In 1966, the Education Commission warned us that a mere expansion of the traditional system of formal education would solve no problem but would only create several new ones. This warning is being understood and realized now, and we have at least begun to talk about the transformation of the formal school system or of creating alternatives to it. But effective action to give concrete shape to this new thinking is yet to start. Meanwhile, immense financial difficulties have cropped up and slowed down expansion of the formal system – a step that we should have taken even earlier for good academic reasons. At any rate, the situation now seems to be ripe to abandon our exclusive reliance on the formal school system which is nearly 160 years

old and to begin serious efforts to transform it or to build up alternatives. If this were to happen, the current financial stringency would have served a useful purpose.

One important point needs to be made. The formal educational system has played a useful role in expanding educational facilities at a time when the spread of education among the people was very limited and the community, whose resources in non-formal education were all highly traditional, did not have any teaching and learning resources which could help it modernize itself. Even today, there are communities in remote rural and tribal areas which have so few non-traditional educational resources that we will have to develop a formal educational system in their midst, modified suitably to meet the local situation, as a first step to their modernization. But in most parts of India, the formal system of education has played its useful role : it has sown the elements of the new education we need and created enough teaching and learning resources in the community which we can now exploit for further development. In fact, we have now reached a stage when to have 'more' of the same old formal system of education would be highly counterproductive. But we could make a sudden leap in our educational development if we were to use all the existing community resources to create the new educational system visualized here. This is, therefore, the one chance we should not miss under any circumstances.

### ***A Programme for Action***

In view of the foregoing discussion, what is the programme of action that we might develop in India for expansion of educational facilities?

The first and the most important step would be to abandon our exclusive reliance on the traditional system of formal education and to move in the direction of providing life-long education for all or creating a learning society. From this point of view,

- ↳ education should cease to be considered as a one-shot affair meant for children and youth;
- ↳ education and work should be looked upon as complementary forces which operate simultaneously throughout the entire

life of an individual;

- ↳ all the three channels of education – full-time, part-time, and part-time – should be developed in every stage and in every sector of education and given equal status;
- ↳ education should cease to be looked upon as a school process : it should be a social process covering *all* learning that takes place, whether in or outside the school;
- ↳ education should also cease to be the delegated responsibility of a profession and should become the direct social responsibility in which every individual is involved, both as a teacher and as a student;
- ↳ the right to learn should be assured to every individual, without any discrimination and with full equality of opportunity, and he should also receive all the support and facilities necessary for its effective exercise throughout his life; and
- ↳ the non-formal sector which has been neglected in the past should be developed and blended with the formal sector in an integrated fashion to create a new system of education which will have the advantages of both the sectors and also eliminate the weaknesses which arise when these sectors are developed in isolation.

There would hardly be two opinions about the desirability of this goal and of moving in this direction. What would, however, be challenged is its feasibility. How can we, it might be asked, hope to create an infrastructure for life-long learning for all when we are not in a position to provide even four years' universal education for all? A little closer analysis will, however, show that the spread of education would be cheaper in the new system than in the traditional system of formal education. The poverty of our material resources gets highlighted and becomes the principal hurdle in our attempt to expand the formal education system. In the new system, it is our abundant human resources that will be highlighted and become a principal tool for achieving the maximum of expansion at a minimum of cost. While monetary issues are important and we shall have to invest considerably more in developing a learning society, money is not likely to be the most important hurdle in this regard. The basic problems are really organizational and political; and they relate to the courage to make the hard decisions, to modify the

structure of the traditional system of formal education, to fight the vested interests of the well-to-do classes and of the profession, to provide the leadership needed, and to enthuse the people and all concerned by building up a mass movement of social and economic reconstruction of which educational reconstruction on the lines indicated here would be an integral part.

It must also be pointed out that it is the dependence on the formal system of education with its immense needs of monetary investment that has widened the gap between the poor and the rich nations; and on that basis, the gap will continue to widen rather than be bridged. In the new educational system visualized here, which emphasizes human effort and mobilization of all social resources and institutions for educational purposes, the gap will be much smaller and can be more easily bridged. The programme is, therefore, more egalitarian, not only on the national scene but even in the international field.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Where Do We Go From Here ?

IN THE COURSE OF THE PRECEDING THREE CHAPTERS, WE discussed the salient features of the educational system from the point of view of our deliberate and simultaneous pursuit of the three basic goals of equality, quality, and quantity. We find that our record has been a mixed picture of light and shade and that while we have every reason to be proud of our achievements, our failures are even greater and leave no room for complacency. In this final chapter, it is proposed to link all our findings together so that we can indicate some guidelines for future action.

#### *The Transformation of the Formal Education System*

The most significant finding that arises from the foregoing discussion is that whether or not we succeed in our attempts to achieve equality, quality, and quantity in the educational system depends partly on the nature of the educational system and partly upon the nature of the society itself.

With regard to the first issue, our discussions have shown that our attempts to achieve equality, quality, and quantity in education have been very adversely affected by the character of the formal education system which we have built up in the country over the past 160 years and the almost exclusive dependence we have placed thereon for the spread of education among the people. The main features of this system, which have remained almost unchanged over all these years and which are the root causes of most of our educational failures, may be summed up as follows :

1. The system has been founded on the basic values of liberalism, individualism, and competitiveness. It emphasizes the individual goals of education while social goals are greatly underemphasized and neglected. This helps the classes to strengthen their privileged position and makes education a weak instrument of social transformation. It is also opposed to

the socialistic pattern of society which we desire to create and which assumes that "individual fulfilment will come, not through selfish and narrow loyalties to personal or group interests, but through the dedication of all to the wider loyalties of national development in all its parameters".<sup>1</sup>

2. The formal education system still functions on the basic concepts evolved at the opening of the nineteenth century : it is a system of single-point entry, sequential annual promotions, and full-time instruction by professional teachers. By its very definition, it excludes all workers – whether children, youth, or adults – from its purview and is, therefore, unable to spread education among the poor people. Moreover, the overemphasis on professionalism increases unit costs (because teachers always want better salaries, better facilities, and lower pupil-teacher ratios) and makes the spread of education extremely difficult, if not impossible. The system is, therefore, inimical both to equality and to quantity. It also becomes inimical to quality because, on account of paucity of resources, standards of education are often diluted to achieve expansion. Moreover, the very exclusion of all workers, who are the larger and the more important social group, affects the capacity of the system to change society.

3. The definitions of quality adopted in the system have a definite middle class bias and are not helpful for the liberation of the masses or for social transformation. For instance, information-gathering and verbal and linguistic skills are over-emphasized and productive skills are neglected. This perpetuates the dichotomy between education and work and places a wrong premium on white-collar attitudes. Even less emphasis is placed on the promotion of values. At the personal level, there is a greater emphasis on aping the consumption-oriented societies of the West than on traditional values (such as self-restraint and self-reliance) and those values which a modern society needs (such as competence or sense of responsibility). Social values such as commitment to social justice or equality, consideration for others, respect for public property or public sanitation, or avoidance of conspicuous consumption are also neglected. Political education which could have linked education power-

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1. *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66)*, para 1.15.

fully to social development has been almost completely ignored. In fact, our concepts of quality really support the *status quo*, strengthen the position of the well-to-do classes, and build up a bridge between quality and privilege, especially because of the attempt to maintain a small number of quality institutions to which the privileged can secure admission while the bulk of the institutions which provide access to the masses remain sub-standard.

4. The system almost totally ignores the non-formal sector, without the proper incorporation of which in the formal system, education cannot be spread to the workers or be linked effectively with development or social transformation.

5. The system has obtained a virtual monopoly over the entire educational process : it alone can prepare individuals for well-established certificates, diplomas, or degrees which have a value in the employment market, and it alone can certify the attainments of students. This has stifled all genuine educational effort outside the system.

6. The system is geared mainly to meet the needs of the class structure in power consisting of property, employment in the organized sector, and higher education. There is a tremendous resistance in the system to provide resources to those who are outside the system and equally tremendous pressures to ensure that more and more money is spent to give more and better education to those who are already within the system. This is why programmes of universal elementary education for children or adult education tend to be neglected.

7. The policies adopted in the system even in secondary and higher education (which mainly benefit the well-to-do classes) are academically indefensible. Institutionalized secondary and higher education ought to have been of good quality, related quantitatively to employment opportunities or manpower needs, and provided in well-planned, academically viable, efficient, and economic institutions to which admissions would be made on the basis of merit and social justice and which would have adequate hostels and scholarships to ensure that the place of residence does not become a privilege. All these salutary principles have also been neglected so that standards have deteriorated, the place of residence has become a privilege, and tremendous problems of educated unemployment have been posed.

8. The system has grown to a fantastic size over the past 120 years. In 1855-56, the total number of educational institutions was 50,998 with an enrolment of 923,780 (or 0.5 per cent of the total population). Today, the total number of educational institutions is about 600,000 (with an enrolment of over 9 million or 15 per cent of the total population). The total expenditure on education has also risen from about a million in 1855-56 to about 16,000 million at present.

9. The system has tended to be uniform and rigid and allows little initiative, freedom, creativity, or experimentation within its boundaries. It is very difficult to make this monster move. There is no force within it which can change it radically; and even the political forces outside seem powerless to bring about any basic changes which would adversely affect the vested interests of the entrenched classes. With every year that passes, the monster becomes larger, more entrenched, and more difficult to be moved or changed.

10. The performance of the system is poor and its efficiency low. Waste and ineffectiveness are writ large on every sector. There is overemphasis on spending money (which is in short supply) and unwillingness to put in human effort which, if properly mobilized, would help to spread education and especially to improve standards.

This is the educational system we have given to ourselves; and the main theme of the preceding three chapters has been to show that unless this system is radically transformed on the broad lines indicated earlier, and unless we create a new system of education as indicated broadly in Chapter 3, there is no hope of our being able to provide equality of educational opportunity, or to improve quality, or to spread education widely among the people.

The second significant finding which emerges from this discussion is that the success of our attempts to introduce equality, quality, and quantity in education will depend upon the nature of society also. Our attempts at equality in education have been handicapped by the large inequalities that exist in society. Our attempts at qualitative improvement have been distorted by the pull of the existing social power structure; and our attempts at quantity have also been frustrated by the sub-human conditions under which the majority of our people live. It is, therefore,

obvious that our attempts at bringing about a radical transformation of education based on equality, quality, and quantity cannot succeed unless efforts are simultaneously made to secure social changes through economic and political action. But, unfortunately, our policies in the past have been based on the wrong assumption that even radical educational changes can be made in a static society and that the major social changes needed will result from such educational changes. The British administrators, for instance, assumed a position of neutrality in social matters. But they did hope that modern education would change Indians into Englishmen, except in blood and colour, and that radical social changes would automatically follow. Our own national leaders, who were not only freedom fighters but ardent social reformers as well, also looked upon education as a powerful instrument of cultural, economic, political, and social transformation which would enable the country to solve its problems of poverty, ignorance, and ill-health and help it to create a strong democratic and socialist republic based on freedom, justice, equality, and dignity of the individual. It is this viewpoint that was reflected in the Report of the Education Commission which hoped that a revolutionary transformation of education would lead, in its turn, to revolutionary changes in the society.

In practice, however, it is found that the attempt to bring about social changes through education succeeds only to a limited extent and over a long period of time. For instance, it was the spread of education among women that led gradually to a social change, namely, a rise in their average age of marriage and in their status; and this social change, in its turn, made further spread of education among women possible. Similarly, the spread of education among Scheduled Castes has contributed to social change, namely, a reduction in the rigours of untouchability and improvement in their social status; and this social change, in its turn, has made further education of the Scheduled Castes possible. But this is generally a long-drawn-out process, and it may be argued that, given sufficient time, it will be possible to bring about social changes through education.

This thesis also has two main reservations. The first is that one is not sure whether radical social changes can be brought about through education, although education may prepare the ground for them or even help in their implementation. For instance,

how can property or privilege in society be abolished through educational changes, although the spread of egalitarian concepts through education will certainly create a favourable atmosphere for these changes which must, in the last analysis, involve hard political decisions? Secondly, we must recognize that it is also not possible to make basic or radical changes within the educational system if corresponding changes in society itself are not simultaneously carried out. For instance, equality of educational opportunity cannot be provided within the educational system if society itself continues to be organized on the basis of privilege. Similarly, work cannot be given its central position within the educational system if the white-collar attitudes which denigrate manual labour continue to dominate society. This is a severe limitation on the capacity of education to change itself. The best that one can assert, therefore, is that it is possible to make minor changes within the educational system even when the social structure remains unchanged, and that these minor changes, over time, will bring about certain social changes of varying significance which, in their turn, may facilitate the introduction of further educational changes. But in regard to major social changes (or when quick changes are needed), education has only a minor role to play and must yield precedence to the political process : it can only prepare for, complete, or consolidate a social change decided elsewhere, whether by bullet or by ballot.

One point needs to be made. Whether education can or cannot bring about social change also depends upon the type of education provided. It is the goals of education, its content, and the effectiveness of its implementation that invest education with power, the power to change man and to change society. What has happened in India is that education itself has been a very weak instrument. Even our exclusive reliance on bringing about social changes through the instrumentality of education would have paid richer dividends if we had really made our education a powerful instrument of individual growth and social change. This is precisely what we have signally failed to do.

An alternative strategy would be to assume that educational changes should be attempted only after a social change has been brought about through a political instrument. For instance, if radical changes in the structure of a society are brought about through a revolution and if an attempt is made to bring about

educational changes as a follow-up measure of high priority, we will have outstanding results, not only in social transformation but also in educational transformation. The experience of communist countries which have radically transformed their educational systems within a short period *after* the revolution bears ample testimony in support of this view. In all these countries, a radical transformation of the society on egalitarian principles was the first item on the agenda of reform. The educational changes followed this social change; and they were planned on an equally revolutionary footing, and were given adequate priority and considerable resources so that their results also had been equally outstanding. Several educational thinkers, therefore, argue that we must wait till the revolution is ushered in to bring about a radical transformation of the educational system; and until then, any tinkering with the problem of educational reform is mere revisionism which will serve no useful purpose and which will only delay the ultimate consummation. While the thesis is certainly plausible, not every one will accept it. The revolution is certainly not round the corner; and while one may not obstruct another committed person in trying to bring about a revolution, one will not also agree to sit with folded hands till the blessed day dawns. Moreover, it can also be argued that not all attempts at educational reform before the revolution are revisionist in character. Some of them may actually help generate social and political forces that will promote the revolution and many will give us the essential experience and expertise which will help us plan post-revolution educational reforms with greater confidence and hope of success.

The third option is to abandon both these extreme positions of social change through education or educational change through social revolution, and to decide to change both education and society simultaneously. There are several instances to ,how that we can get very good results in this way. For instance, the transfer of political power from the urban to the rural people and from the top to the middle classes was facilitated because adult franchise and the spread of education operated together. The lot of Scheduled Castes and Tribes has improved fairly quickly because reservation of seats in legislatures and in government service is being done side by side with the spread of education among them.

Two points deserve attention in this context. The first is the obvious issue that the social and educational changes proposed to be implemented simultaneously must be complementary to each other and mutually supportive. Secondly, they must also have a critical size. Small or marginal changes, even if continuously made, tend to be absorbed within the existing structure and do not produce any tangible results or the needed impact.

It, therefore, follows that if the best results are to be obtained, three aspects of the programme have to be emphasized : *simultaneity, mutual complementarity, and minimum critical size.*

Of these three possible choices, the first is not desirable in the present situation because, as was pointed out earlier, the attempt to bring about social changes through education succeeds only to a limited extent and over a long period of time. We are terribly short of time, even for decent survival, and there is no room at present for the nineteenth century concepts of gradualism. Moreover, our needs cannot be met by a limited social or educational change. We have a sick society on our hands which is becoming sicker every year. There is, thus, an urgent need for a radical social and educational transformation. Some of these changes may be mainly attempted through education (e.g., universal education for children in the age group 6-14), but they will succeed better if a programme of meeting the minimum needs of the people living below the poverty line is simultaneously pursued. On the other hand, some of these will have to be directly attempted through political and economic action (e.g., rural development) and will succeed better if they are simultaneously accompanied by appropriate educational programmes (e.g., the non-formal education of out-of-school youth in the age group 15-25). In other words, even if we begin on the first assumption that we shall attempt social changes through education, the inherent compulsions of the situation will inevitably take us to the third assumption that our best hope lies in attempting a simultaneous and complementary programme of both social and educational changes of at least a minimum critical size.<sup>2</sup>

2. This in fact was practically the conclusion that the Education Commission finally reached although it began with the first assumption. It said : "We have emphasized that educational and national reconstruction are intimately interrelated and that perhaps the most effective way of breaking the vicious circle in which we find ourselves at present is to begin educational

### *A Programme of Action*

What is the programme of simultaneous social and educational changes of a critical size that we should try to implement over the next ten years ?

1. *The Social Changes* : The preceding discussions have shown that we have not been able to achieve equality in society and that the quality of life of the bulk of our people is still very poor. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, we had a society which was divided into a class of the haves and a large mass of the have-nots and which was inequalitarian, hierarchical, and stratified. There have been some changes in the classes of the haves during the past 160 years (and so also among the have-nots) and an element of vertical mobility has been introduced. But the overall picture of the society continues to be broadly the same – hierarchical, stratified, and inequalitarian. Direct political and economic action is, therefore, needed to cut down the conspicuous consumption of the top 30 per cent of the people and simultaneously to improve the standards of living of the poor people, and especially of the bottom 30 per cent, through provision of guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage and the maintenance of a large public distribution system for the basic essential goods. Internationally, our stand is for a better distribution of resources between the different countries of the world. It should also be a national policy. Simultaneously, we should cut the direct link between education in the formal system and employment so that education becomes really a pursuit of truth and excellence and not a rat race for ambition to climb to privilege.

2. *The Educational Changes* : The minimum programme of educational reforms of a viable critical size that can make a significant improvement in the present situation will obviously include, as the preceding discussions have shown,

reconstruction in a big way. We would, however, like to point out that it will not be possible to make much headway in education unless the basic problems of life are also squarely faced and resolutely tackled. This stresses the interlinking of education and national development."

— *Report*, para 19.50.

- ↳ the radical transformation of the existing system of traditional formal education on the broad lines indicated here;
- ↳ the proper development of programmes of mass education which have been neglected so far, viz., the provision of universal elementary education to all children in a common school system with a view to making them life-long students, the development of adult education, and non-formal education for out-of-school youth in the age group 15-25; and
- ↳ reorganization of secondary and higher education on the lines discussed in Chapters 1 and 3.

This experiment of simultaneous social and educational reconstruction can be effectively carried out only through a nation-wide mass movement which has full political support and in which every individual is fully involved. It is a pity that, in the political arena, education is still a marginal issue so that the basic educational problems do not get highlighted in the political debates. Either the existing parties will have to be educated on the significance and urgency of these problems or appropriate new social and political forces that are committed to these issues will have to come into existence.

For the planning and implementation of this great experiment, Gandhi is relevant, and so is Marx. What is needed, therefore, is a dialogue between Gandhism and Marxism which will enable us to discover and put across the most effective programmes of educational and social reconstruction suited to the unique civilization that is India.



## APPENDIX I

### Structural Changes Needed in the Existing Formal System of Elementary Education

A MAJOR IMPLICATION OF THE DECISION TO PROVIDE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY education in the age group 6-14 in ten years is that the necessary radical trans-forma-tion in the traditional model would be carried out without delay. The traditional model for the development of primary education was essentially meant for the well-to-do classes who appreciate the value of education and are also in a position to feed, clothe, and equip their children to attend schools on a whole-time basis. It has, therefore, a built-in bias in favour of the edu-cation of the classes and a built-in antagonism for the education of the masses. It is this basic issue which often goes unrecognized and needs clarification.

The existing primary schools may be regarded as a single-point entry, sequential, and full-time system of institutional instruction by full-time and professional teachers. It is necessary to analyse each of these attributes in some detail.

*Single-Point Entry* : Ordinarily, a child is expected to enter the primary education system at about the age of six (or even five in some States) in Class I. It is true that children below or above this prescribed age of first admission are also allowed to join Class I. It is also true that children who have studied privately may be examined and allowed to join, according to their abilities, in a class higher than the first. But such admissions of underage or overage children in Class I or in classes other than first are exceptions rather than the rule; and it would be correct to say that, for the average child, especially in the rural areas, there is only one age of entry, namely, six or five, and only one class in which fresh admission can be given, namely, Class I.

This system has the obvious advantage that it tends to create a homo-geneous age group cohort in Class I which tends to rise, year after year, to successive classes, and which makes class-room instruction comparatively easier. But it has its disadvantages also. For instance, what happens to a rural child who does not get into Class I at about the age of 11? In practice, this child can never get into school again and he will have to live and die as an illiterate adult. All that we can say to this child is : "Sorry, my boy. You have unfortunately missed the bus. But when you grow up, get married, and have a child, bring him along when he is six and we shall be happy to admit him in Class I." If, by some misfortune, this child were to miss admission in Class I at about the age of six, we are prepared to wait patiently for the grandchild. It is this approach of providing a single-point entry to the entire educational system that makes it so ineffective in practice.

What happens to a child who desires to learn at a little later age, say, 11 or 14? It is true that such a child can and is also admitted to primary schools. But the admission is made invariably in Class I and this grown-up child is

required to sit along with other very young children, learn the same lessons, and at the same speed. This is usually very boring to this grown-up child who, more often than not, runs away from the school and becomes a 'dropout'. What such a child needs is specially-organized classes where primary education is imparted through special techniques suited to his more mature mind. But there is no provision in our system for this purpose.

It is obvious that our educational system would gain infinitely if it were to provide, not a single-point entry at about the age of six, but multiple-point entries at different ages, say, 9, 11, 14, or even 17. The desire to learn may spring up in the minds of children at any of these later ages; and our system should be elastic enough to admit them into primary schools which are specially organized and where instruction is imparted on lines which are more suited to their maturity. Such alternative channels of admission would bring, into the school system large numbers of children who now remain out and add merely to the numbers of illiterate adults. It is also obvious that such a system would be far more effective from the point of view of the spread of literacy among the masses than the present model of a single-point entry at Class I at about the age of six.

*Sequential Character* : The existing primary schools are also a sequential system in the sense that a child is expected to complete one class every year and to rise to the next higher class after passing the annual examination. There are, of course, large exceptions. Many children fail to pass the examination at the end of the year and are, therefore, detained in the same class as repeaters. The extent of this evil, generally known as stagnation, is very large in our system at present. On the other hand, a few children may complete two classes in a year and be given a 'double' promotion. But such cases are extremely rare. By and large, therefore, the system functions in a sequential manner and children rise every year from class to class.

The primary objective of this system again is to facilitate class-room instruction by grouping children of similar attainments together. This purpose is admirably served, no doubt. On the other hand, it does not meet the needs of children who begin late. For instance, it has been shown through practical experimentation that grown-up children of 11 or 14 years of age are able to complete the studies of Class I-V in about two years. Very often, grown-up children of 14 to 18 years of age are able to complete the course prescribed for Class I-VIII in a period of 2-3 years and pass the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination creditably. Programmes of this type are obviously very useful and suitable for conditions of a developing country like ours. But these have never been developed, except in a few experimental projects conducted by well-meaning and forward-looking educationists.

*Full-time Instruction* : Another important aspect of the existing primary schools is that they only provide full-time institutional instruction. This of course does not create any problem for the classes who are economically in a position to feed, clothe, and equip their children to attend full-time schools. But the system is extremely antagonistic to the interests of the masses who are so poor that their children are compelled to work at home or outside and to add to the meagre family budget. Every boy is generally required to work as soon as he grows up and becomes about nine years old; he works

on the family farm, tends cattle, or goes out to earn some wages in whatever way possible. A girl is required to assist her over-burdened mother and to look after the younger children who keep continually coming in. It is impossible for those children to attend schools on a whole-time basis; and that is why they either never go to school or generally drop out, sooner rather than later. These hard economic factors are the principal reasons for the large wastage which now afflicts primary education and account for about two-thirds of it or even more.

This wastage can be overcome in a variety of ways. For instance, the standards of living of the common people may be so raised that they are also in a position to feed, clothe, and equip their children to attend full-time institutions. The society may provide cash grants to the parents of such children to compensate them for their foregone earnings and then compel them to send their children to schools. Alternatively, a system of part-time education can be organized so that all such children, who are required to work in or for their families, may be able to earn as well as to learn. It is obvious that the first of the methods, however laudable, can only be a long-term solution. The second is financially beyond the reach of government at this time and for years to come. The only practicable alternative, therefore, is the third, namely, to organize a large-scale programme of part-time education for working children. Today, our motto is that either the child attends the school on a full-time basis or is compelled to drop out. This heartless system – heartless to the poor man's child – has no place in a country like ours where the vast bulk of the people are so poor. It should be replaced by another in which every child is required to attend school on a full-time basis, if possible, and on a part-time basis, if necessary. The hours of part-time instruction in such a system can also be organized in a manner that would suit the working conditions of the children and enable them to educate themselves without interfering with the essential work which they must put in for their families.

*Exclusive Utilization of Professional Teachers:* Yet another aspect of the existing primary schools is that they utilize the service of full-time professional teachers only. This is done in the name of standards and no one would quarrel with the attempt to utilize full-time professional teachers. However, an exclusive dependence on this pattern creates several problems. The first is a continuing increase in costs because the inescapable consequence of such professionalization is a rise in salaries and allowances of teachers (which increases cost per teacher unit) and a continuous reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio (which increases cost per pupil). Moreover, the very cause of quality often suffers because of this emphasis. It has been suggested, for instance, that the standards in the primary schools would improve if they utilize local talent and teaching resources, e.g., a local carpenter or a tailor may be used to teach a craft in primary schools or a local good singer may be utilized for teaching music. It is not necessary that such teachers should necessarily be qualified from the strictly professional point of view and it is also possible to make them good teachers through short programmes of orientation. But such efforts are never made. The costs of primary schools may also go down if pupils themselves are utilized for purposes of teaching. In the traditional indigenous schools of India, for instance, the monitorial system was a very

common feature under which pupils were paired off and a senior pupil was required to take charge of instructing a junior pupil entrusted to his care, under the general guidance of the teacher. Such a system or its variations can give excellent results, specially in single teacher schools or in schools where it is not economically feasible to provide one teacher for every class. In several areas, it is also possible to use local young persons to assist the teachers of local primary schools in educating the children of the community and pay them small allowances which would be extremely valuable in the local conditions, but which would, nevertheless, reduce the overall costs of education to a substantial extent. But these devices also remain unexplored. What is worse, whenever such proposals for the utilization of non-professional teachers are put forward, the entire organization of the professional teachers rises up in revolt and sees to it that they are neither adopted nor allowed to succeed.

One other point needs mention : our primary schools have no pre-schools or creches attached to them. The most common work which girls from poor families are required to do is to look after young children. On the one hand, we are anxious to promote girls' education and organize a number of programmes to increase their enrolment. On the other, we do not permit girls to bring young children with them and request them to leave them at home before coming to school. Since this is impossible, the practice means only one thing: the girls are prevented from joining primary schools and there is a positive disincentive in the system against the spread of education among girls from poor families. Experiments have been tried, notably by the late Smt. Tarabai Modak, wherein small creches or preschools were attached to primary schools and were conducted by the girls themselves under the general supervision of the teachers. The additional costs involved in the programme were marginal, but they succeeded very well in enrolling a large number of girls from the poorer families. This elasticity of organization is absent in the model that we have developed and, consequently, the development of education of girls from the masses is considerably hampered.

*The Changes Needed :* It is thus obvious that the existing model of the primary education system favours the well-to-do whose children complete the primary course successfully (their main objective is secondary or higher education for which they look upon primary education merely as inevitable stepping stone) and harms the interests of the masses, the bulk of whose children are converted into 'failures' and 'drop-outs'. If primary education is to be made universal, we recommend that the traditional model of the primary education system should be radically modified on the following lines to make due provision for the education of the children of the masses:

1. The single-point entry system must be replaced by a multiple-point entry system under which it will be open for older children of 9, 11, or 14 to join the primary schools in separate classes specially organized for their needs.
2. The sequential character of the system must go; and it should be possible for older children to join the prescribed courses at any time and also to complete them in much shorter period.
3. The exclusive emphasis on full-time institutional instruction that is laid

in the present system should be replaced by a large programme of part-time education which should be arranged to suit the convenience of children who are required to work.

4. The exclusive emphasis on the utilization of full-time professional teachers should go. An attempt should be made to utilize all the teaching resources available in the local community; and the services of part-time local teachers and even of senior students should be fully utilized for promoting instruction in the primary schools.
5. There should be no rigid demarcation between primary schools and preschools. Girls who are required to look after young children should be encouraged to bring them to the school. These could be taken care of in pre-school or creches attached to the primary schools which are managed by the girls themselves, by turns, under the guidance of the teachers. This will provide a valuable service at the minimal additional cost and assist materially in the spread of education amongst girls from the poorer families.

These major structural changes should be carried out on the basis of highest priority. This alone can help us to implement the directive of Article 45 of the Constitution over the next ten years.

This recommendation, let us incidentally point out, is in line with the latest trends in world education where the exclusively formal systems are being currently blended with large programmes of non-formal education to meet the needs of modern and changing societies and to provide the base of a new system of life-long education for all. Even at its best, a formal system of education with its single-point entry, its sequential promotions from class to class every year, its exclusively full-time courses, and its professionalized body of teachers, has several limitations. It can serve only the non-working population which is the smaller and less effective section of the total population. It offers no help or a second chance to those unfortunate children who miss its narrow doors of admission or who are compelled to step off it for social and economic reasons. It contributes only a small proportion of the total education which an individual receives (the bulk of this comes from the home, the society at large, and the personal and working life of the individual himself). It has also a tendency to become a vested interest and help to perpetuate privilege or conformity rather than to promote equality or healthy dissent. At the same time, its cost continues to mount till a point is reached when even the most affluent nations begin to feel that they are beyond their reach. To overcome all these difficulties, an attempt is now being made, all over the world, to abandon the traditional obsession with the exclusive use of the formal system of education and to blend it fittingly with the non-formal system. This is being done, not only at the first, but at all stages of education. We shall therefore be in good company and on sound footing if we introduce this reform in India at the primary stage. We understand that similar steps are also being taken at the secondary and university stages.



## APPENDIX II

### Programmes of Qualitative Improvement Recommended by the Education Commission

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION (1964-66) WAS OF THE VIEW THAT NON-monetary inputs are of crucial significance for the qualitative improvement of education. From this point of view, it made several recommendations which have been summarized below.

#### *Organization of a Nation-wide Programme of School Improvement*

Qualitative improvement in education is best achieved when all the human agencies concerned - teachers, students, and parents - are motivated to put in their best efforts. This becomes easily possible when programmes of qualitative improvement are organized on the basis of a nation-wide mass movement. The Education Commission, therefore, made the following recommendation :

“10.24. In view of the great need to improve standards of education at the school stage, we recommend that a nation-wide programme of school improvement should be developed in which conditions will be created for each school to strive continually to achieve the best results of which it is capable. No comprehensive programme of educational development can ever be put across unless it involves *every* educational institution and *all* the human factors connected with it – its teachers, students and the local community – and unless it provides the necessary inducements to take them put in their best efforts. For various reasons, this involvement does not take place and the motivation is not created at present. The main objective of this programme is to create these factors which have a large share in determining standards.”

#### *Preparation of Institutional Plans*

For a comprehensive and well-organized planning process, we need plans at the national, State, district, and institutional levels. In our situation at present, the national plans are overemphasized; the State level planning has developed to some extent but still leaves a good deal to be desired; at the district level, there is hardly any planning; and except for a few good institutions, no attempt is made to plan at the institutional level. The Education Commission, therefore, recommended that a programme should be drawn up and implemented under which every educational institution would, as a matter of course, prepare and implement its own plans of growth and

development. This is a very important recommendation because every educational institution has a personality of its own which has to be respected if the best results in education are to be obtained.

On this subject, the following observations made by the Education Commission deserve special attention:

“10.26. Each such plan will necessarily include proposals for the improvement of the physical facilities available in the institution. We realize the need to provide certain minimum essential facilities without which it is almost impossible for teachers to work. However, we would like to emphasize two points in this regard :

(1) The first is that even within its existing resources, however limited they may be, every educational institution can do a great deal more, through better planning and harder work, to improve the quality of education it provides. In our opinion, therefore, the emphasis in this movement should be, not so much on physical resources, as on motivating the human agencies concerned to make their best efforts in a coordinated manner for the improvement of education, and thereby offset the shortcomings in the physical resources. There are a large number of programmes which an educational institution can undertake on the basis of human effort and in spite of paucity of physical resources. These include: reduction in stagnation and wastage; improvement of teaching methods; assistance to retarded students; special attention to gifted students; enrichment of the curricula; trying out new techniques of work; improved method of organizing the instructional programme of the school; and increasing the professional competence of teachers through programmes of self-study. It is the planning and implementation of programmes of this type that should be emphasized.

(2) The second is that an intensive effort should be made to improve the facilities provided in schools through the cooperation of the local community. Very good work in this respect has been done in the Madras State where school improvement conferences have been organized for some years and large-scale assistance from the local community has been obtained for improving school facilities. Similar programmes should be developed in all parts of the country, both at the primary and secondary stages.”

#### *Elasticity and Dynamism*

The existing educational system has grown to a tremendous size. Because of a tendency to centralize power and authority, which was quite understandable under British administration, it became uniform and rigid, especially between 1901 and 1921. Even after the attainment of independence, however, the trend towards centralization has increased rather than decreased, with the result that the educational system today is even more uniform and rigid than what it was in 1921 or even in 1947. In a vast country like India with all its diversities and pluralities, an attempt to create a uniform and rigid educational structure is as difficult as swimming against a current. What is worse, any attempt for reform or to change the system becomes very difficult. The system generally operates under the maxim that either everyone

moves or none moves, and the only result is that none moves. On the other hand, our situation has great potential for the development of an educational system which is elastic and dynamic. This will provide each individual institution or local community enough elbow-room to adjust education to its own needs without sacrificing the advantages which it can get by being a part of a large national structure. The Education Commission, therefore, pointed out that a pre-condition for a nation-wide programme of qualitative improvement was to encourage initiative, creativity, and experimentation on the part of teachers and institutions. It said :

“10.28 ... What is needed is a decentralized approach which can permit each institution (or at least a group of institutions) to go ahead at its own pace and try out new ideas. This is not possible in the existing system where educational plans are prepared with the State as a unit and where all that is expected on the part of teachers and institutions is conformity. In the proposal made above, Government has to regard each institution as a unit in itself, having an individuality of its own, and to help it to grow at its own pace and in its own individual manner. This will make it possible for teachers to participate in the joy of creation and will motivate them to more intensive efforts at qualitative improvement.”

#### *Selective Development*

For qualitative improvement of education, the Education Commission recommended, what it described, a ‘seed-farm technology’. Under this technology, good seed or excellence is generated in a few seed-farms and is then extended to the remaining farms. In education also, such a strategy will mean that a few selected institutions, say, about 10 per cent of the total, would be selected for improvement to optimum levels and then the excellence generated in these institutions would be extended to other institutions. The Education Commission had recommended that this policy should be adopted and followed at all stages and in all sectors of education.

The advantages of this strategy, especially in a situation where resources are limited, are obvious. However, it may be objected to on democratic grounds. The Education Commission anticipated this objection and met it effectively in the following words :

“11.25. A possible objection to these proposals may be that what is proposed here is not quite democratic, that it seeks to institute a system of elite education by favouring certain institutions and impoverishing others. We recognize that our approach does involve at this stage a certain differentiation between the universities. This is, however, not only inevitable in an economy of scarcity but is also the only sure and practicable way to benefit all ultimately in the shortest time possible. Moreover, we must recognize that pursuit of excellence implies and requires a discriminatory approach; and that to provide equal resources to all irrespective of the quality of their performance and potentiality for growth merely promotes mediocrity. We are trying to establish a democratic social order in our country and obviously a democracy

cannot flourish unless it has at its disposal the services of a highly trained and powerfully motivated educated class. Unless a system can be devised which will produce such persons in much larger numbers than is being done at present, every aspect of the country's development will be prejudicially affected. In fact, we may go further and say that there is always need for elite from Chicago, Harvard and Columbia. The upper stratum of American higher education was developed in the first quarter of the present century, largely by the Ph.D.s from Chicago, Harvard and Columbia. The development of British higher education in the first half of the present century was largely due to the fact that, until recently, the staff of the new universities in most subjects was supplied by the universities of Oxford and Cambridge which, by 1900, had taken their place as distinguished centres of scholarship and high standards of teaching."

What the Commission has said about higher education in the above passage would obviously apply, with equal force, in other stages and sectors of education as well.

#### ***College and School Complexes***

In the existing system, every educational institution is 'atomized' in the sense that it functions in total isolation from others and is directly controlled by the State education department. Even within institutions, further atomization often takes place. In a university, for instance, the different departments often function in complete isolation from one another; and even within a department, many of the teachers are often not even on speaking terms with each other. It is impossible to get the best educational results under such conditions. The Education Commission, therefore, recommended that educational institutions in a neighbourhood should function as a group and strengthen and support each other; the universities should help the colleges, the colleges should help the secondary schools, and the secondary schools should help the elementary schools, through a variety of programmes such as provision of extension services, training of personnel, and sharing of facilities. The important recommendations made by the Commission on this subject have been quoted below :

"2.49. *The Role of Universities and Colleges.* The universities and colleges, for example, should assist the secondary schools in improving their efficiency. The following are some of the programmes which can be undertaken :

- Each college can be functionally related to a number of secondary schools in the neighbourhood and enabled to provide extension services and guidance to them to improve their standards. A similar programme for the colleges themselves could be developed through the universities.
- The universities can conduct special diploma courses, either pre-service or in-service, for improving the competence of secondary teachers. These can preferably be correspondence courses, requiring only short-term personal attendance.

- The universities can conduct experimental secondary or primary schools to evolve improved techniques of teaching and organization.
- The university and college teachers can take upon themselves the responsibility for improving school textbooks and providing better types of instructional materials.
- The universities and colleges could select talented students from the schools in different subjects at an appropriate stage, say, in the age-group 13-15, and help them to develop their knowledge in special fields through individual guidance, provision of laboratory facilities, etc., over and above regular school work.

These programmes have been cited merely as illustrations. Once the principle that the universities should assist in the improvement of standards at lower stages is accepted, it will be possible to devise many other programmes.

"10.39. *The School Complex.* The idea of the school complex or the manner in which a high school, about three or four higher primary schools and 10 to 20 lower primary schools in the neighbourhood would be integrally linked together, has been described earlier. We shall now proceed to discuss how the school complexes should function as a part of the new supervision we are proposing. As explained earlier, the objectives of introducing the school complex will be two: to break the isolation of schools and help them to function in small, face-to-face, cooperative groups; and to make a delegation of authority from the Department possible. As we visualize the picture, the District Educational Officer will be mainly in touch with each school complex and, as far as possible, deal with it as a unit. The complex itself will perform certain delegated tasks which would otherwise have been performed by the inspecting officers of the Department, and deal with the individual schools within it. Under this programme, the schools will gain in strength, will be able to exercise greater freedom and will help in making the system more elastic and dynamic. The Department will also gain - it will be able to concentrate its attention on major essentials and can afford to have fewer officers but at a higher level of competence.

" 10.40. How will the school complex function? If the system is to be effective, adequate powers and responsibilities will have to be delegated to the complex. These may include the following :

- (1) The school complex may be used as a unit for the introduction of better methods of evaluation and for regulating the promotion of children from class to class or from one level of school to another.
- (2) As stated earlier, it is possible to provide certain facilities and equipment, which cannot be provided separately to each school, jointly for all the schools in a complex. This will include a projector with a portable generator which can go round from school to school. Similarly, the central high school may have a good laboratory and students from the primary school in the complex may be brought to it during the vacation or holidays for practical work or demonstration. The central high school may maintain a circulating library from which books could be sent out to schools in the neighbourhood. The facilities of special teachers could also be

shared. For instance, it is not possible to appoint separate teachers for physical education or for art work in primary schools. But such teachers are appointed on the staff of secondary schools; and it should be possible, by a carefully planned arrangement, to make use of their services to guide the teachers in primary schools and also to spend some time with their students.

(3) The in-service education of teachers in general, and the upgrading of the less qualified teachers in particular, should be an important responsibility of the school complex. For this purpose, it should maintain a central circulating library for the use of teachers. It should arrange periodical meetings of all the teachers in the complex, say, once a month, where discussions on school problems could be had, some talks or film shows arranged, or some demonstration lessons given. During the vacations, even short special courses can be organized for groups of teachers.

(4) Each school should be ordinarily expected to plan its work in sufficient detail for the ensuing academic year. Such planning could preferably be done by the headmasters of the schools within the complex. They should meet together and decide on broad principles of development in the light of which each individual school can plan its own programme.

(5) It is very difficult to provide leave substitutes for teachers in primary schools, because the size of each school is so small that no leave reserve teacher can be appointed. This becomes particularly difficult in single teacher schools where, if the teacher is on leave, the school has to remain closed. In the school complex concept, it will be possible to attach one or two leave reserve teachers to the central secondary school; and they can be sent to schools within the complex as and when the need arises.

(6) Selected school complexes can be used for trying out and evaluating new textbooks, teachers' guides and teaching aids.

(7) The school complex may also be authorized to modify, within prescribed limits and subject to the approval of the District Educational Officer, the usual prescribed curricula and syllabuses.

Such cooperation between institutions would naturally promote cooperation within institutions also."

#### *Full Utilization of Existing Facilities*

In the present system, utilization of existing facilities is far from happy. If one were to examine the number of days in a year and the number of hours on each day an educational institution works, one would easily come to the conclusion that all its facilities are very highly unutilized. Full utilization is necessary even in rich countries. Not to do so is almost a crime in poor and developing countries. The Education Commission, therefore, recommended that every effort should be made to utilize the existing institutional facilities in our educational system to the fullest extent possible. It said :

"2.42 ... Since it is very costly to provide and maintain the physical plant of educational institutions, it becomes necessary to utilize it as fully as possible, for the longest time on each day and for all the days in the year, by making suitable administrative arrangements. Teachers and students would continue to have their own hours of work and vacations as recommended above. The libraries, laboratories, workshops, craftsheds, etc., should be open all the year round and should be utilized for at least eight hours a day, if not longer. Special vacation programmes should be arranged to utilize institutional facilities for community service, adult education, temporary hostels for day students, enrichment programmes for gifted students and supporting programmes for retarded students. It is not necessary to indicate all the different ways in which the institutional facilities could be utilized all the year round. If an understanding is developed that educational institutions are like temples of learning and should never remain closed, and if a proper climate for sustained work is created, teachers, students and the local communities will themselves discover innumerable methods of utilizing school facilities to the maximum potential throughout the year. As it is difficult to expand educational facilities adequately and wasteful to under-utilize existing resources, such programmes demand urgent attention."

#### *Creating Climate of Dedicated Hard Work*

Education is essentially a stretching process; and standards can be improved only if teachers and students stretch themselves to the utmost. As the main goal of education is social development, idealism is always essential in all educational programmes. It is more needed now than at any time in the past. The Education Commission, therefore, recommended that every effort should be made to create a climate of dedicated and sustained hard work in all educational institutions. It said:

"19.49. Education thus needs and demands, more than anything else, hard work and dedicated service. In particular, it presents a supreme challenge to the students, teachers and educational administrators who are now called upon to create a system of education related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and to maintain it at the highest level of efficiency. It is upon their response to this challenge that the future of the country depends."



### APPENDIX III

## A Programme for the Education of Out-of-School Youth in the Age Group 15-25

#### *Need and Significance*

INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IS NECESSARILY LONG TERM AND BEGINS TO yield results after a generation and, in some cases, even after a long period. Developing countries, however, are pressed greatly for time; and hence an important issue is educational programmes which can yield quicker and almost immediate results. If such programmes can be identified and implemented, those developing countries that will get a much better and quicker return for their investment in education will stand most to benefit.

Several programmes of this type can be suggested. But of all these, probably the most significant and far-reaching would be a crash programme for the education of young persons in the age group 15-25. The size of this group is large, about 25 per cent of the total population. Its members are generally alert, inquisitive, impressionable, and capable of being inspired by emotional commitments to service of the people and the country. As educands, therefore, they offer rich and potential material that is much easier to handle than either children of younger age or adults. What is more important, the cost of an educational programme for them are comparatively less (for such education is necessarily part-time) and its returns immediate and effective because these young persons will become active and influential members of the society in five to ten years.

#### *Content and Character of the Programme*

A small proportion of the young persons aged 15-25 are undergoing fulltime education at present at different levels – some at the primary, a majority at the secondary, and some at the university stages. But, taken all in all, the enrolment of this age group in all categories of educational institutions does not exceed about 10 per cent of their total population. No proposals are made here regarding the education of this small group already enrolled in schools and colleges. The normal programmes of educational reform would take care of their needs. But what we are concerned with most, in this paper, is the development of an educational programme for the out-of-school youth who form the other 90 per cent of the age group and who are at present without any educational facilities whatsoever. It is for them - and they form about 18 per cent of the total population - that a large-scale educational programme has to be developed on a war footing.

The content and character of this programme will obviously depend upon educational attainments and needs of these young persons. Some of them may

have completed secondary education and a few would even be university graduates. A much larger number would have received some primary education and may be expected to be literate with varying degrees of other educational attainments. But, during the next decade at any rate, a little more than half would be those who have not been to school at all or who left school too early to have attained functional literacy. The programmes to be developed for this group would therefore be at various levels for a large proportion, at the primary level with an emphasis on functional literacy. But for another much smaller and more significant group, the education required would, in its content, be at the secondary level. A small minority of these may even need education at the university level.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that continuing general education alone would be strong enough to attract and hold these young persons and meet their needs. General education will be a necessary component of the new programme, no doubt. But by itself it would not have the necessary vitality. It must be remembered that most of these out-of-school youth are workers, engaged in some activity that enables them to earn a living or to help their family to make both ends meet. Even though they are technically non-workers, they are sharing full responsibilities of the normal work in their families. The focus of their interest is therefore vocational; and what will attract them most is the prospect of improving their present vocational skills so that they can earn a little more, or of learning some new vocational skills that will enable them to improve their economic status. A strong vocational element will therefore have to be built into all educational programmes proposed to be developed for this young group.

Given this strong vocational core, it will be possible to build several other educational elements around it that by themselves would not be strong enough to attract and retain these young persons. The first, as stated above, is general education. The second important component would be family life education, including family planning. Most of the persons in this age group would be married, especially in rural areas, and a programme of family life education will interest them most and would also be extremely beneficial. It is also obvious that it is this group, just entering the procreative stage of life, that needs to be exposed to education in family planning. Unfortunately, the family planning worker does not reach them or become effective with them for sheer absence of a continuing channel of communication. The chances of the family planning programme's succeeding and becoming effective are therefore the largest if it is operated as a part of a comprehensive educational programme for out-of-school youth.

Two other important educational elements can also be added with advantage. The first is the recreational and cultural interest of youth, and the second is their willingness, or even eagerness, to participate in meaningful programmes of nation-building or social service.

It is thus proposed that what these young persons need is a mix of several educational elements – a mix that will have a strong vocational core round which will be built up other important educational interests, such as continuing general education (including functional literacy, where necessary), family life education (including family planning), promotion of recreational

and cultural pursuits, and participation in programmes of social service or national development. The nature of the mix will vary from group to group, and even in the same group, from time to time. The success of the programme will largely depend upon the manner in which its organizers are able to visualize and provide the precise mix that a given group needs at a particular moment.

It must also be pointed out that this will essentially be a programme of part-time education because most of the persons to be educated are employed in one way or another. Those who are unemployed and are able to join on a whole-time basis will have two options : to join any existing educational institution of their choice on a whole-time basis, or to participate in this programme on a part-time basis. But for several reasons, this will only be a part-time programme.

It will be necessary to carry out careful surveys of young persons in a given locality to find out not only what their interests are but also what the times are when they can conveniently receive instruction. The success of the programme will obviously depend as much upon the conformity between the hours of instruction and the leisure time of the youth as upon the 'fit' between its content and their needs and interests.

Part-time classroom instruction would thus be the most important technique. But it should not be the sole technique. It will have to be supplemented, wherever necessary, by correspondence education, education through mass media like the radio and the film, and full-time intensive instruction of comparatively short duration provided in specially arranged residential camps. All these different techniques will have to be mixed appropriately to meet the needs of each group from time to time.

#### *Agencies*

What are the agencies through which this programme can be developed? It will be a fatal mistake to try to create a new agency for the programme. Such a proposal will be extremely costly and will also take too much time. Our policy should, therefore, be to create only a new organization for the programme, and to utilize for its purposes all the resources both human and material of all existing institutions as well as the educational resources available in the community itself, which often go untapped. This is the only economic and practical method of attacking the problem in a massive way and without much loss of time.

The focal agency that should be harnessed for this programme is the huge infrastructure we have created for the education of children and the young – namely, our primary and middle schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities, and vocational institutions of all categories. We have now about 550,000 primary schools, about 120,000 middle schools, about 50,000 secondary schools, about 4,000 colleges, nearly 100 universities or university-level institutions, and some thousands of vocational institutions both for agriculture and industry. They have among them about 2.5 million teachers, thousands of buildings, and equipment valued in ten millions of rupees. These are vast resources that must be utilized for this programme on a part-time basis. There

is also the special advantage for this programme that most of these out-of-school youth will have been at some time students in these schools. It is, therefore, suggested that these institutions should be the centres round which the new programme should be built, and that their teachers, equipment, and buildings should be fully utilized. This will not create any conflict between their normal programmes and this new part-time programme. If steps are taken to pay additional remuneration to teachers for the extra work they will have to do, it will be possible to mount this programme at a minimal cost and in the shortest time.

Important as the role of these educational institutions is in this programme, it is necessary to realize that the cooperation of several other agencies has also to be secured in its proper development. The core of the new programme has to be vocational, and for this the present educational system is not adequately equipped. In addition to the resources that all existing institutions of vocational education can bring to bear, it is necessary to enlist additional support through all other available organizations; for example, the agricultural universities, the Gram Sewak training centres, and the demonstration or seed farms of the agricultural departments can provide valuable resources for education in agriculture. The Industrial Training Institutes can provide a very good base for education in industry. The personnel of the Health Department, institutions of medical education, and the hospitals and dispensaries can add their resources for the development of family life education, including family planning. Several other departments of government can also make their own significant contributions, and it will be necessary to rope all of them into the programme.

Not only this. The large educational resources that the community has, and that generally go untapped, will have to be utilized. For instance, retired teachers can be of great help. The private medical practitioners may have to be involved in courses in family planning. Private industry should also be required to assist and participate. The services of individual craftsmen and other skilled workers, who may be managing their own business, could also be requisitioned on a part-time basis. Sportsmen and artists living in the community can be harnessed to provide for recreational and cultural needs. And so on.

It is claimed that in any given area where the programme is to be developed, we will find not only the educational needs of the young but also several institutions and personnel who have skills and services to meet these needs. What is therefore needed is a survey of the educational needs and interests of the young, on the one hand, and of the institutional and human resources available in the community to meet them, on the other. The contribution of the organizer is to bring these two together in a meaningful manner. This, therefore, is essentially a problem not of a lack of resources but of a lack of the necessary vision and organization. It is these that we have now to emphasize.

In all countries where such programmes have been developed, it is found that the young themselves make very good teachers for the young. It should, therefore, be our policy, right from the start, to develop leaders amongst the out-of-school youth who will take increasingly upon themselves the

growing responsibilities of this educational programme. This is also the reason why such a programme will provide special opportunities for compulsory national service. If government desires to make national service compulsory for university graduates, the development of this programme can provide the necessary field experience; for on the basis of this alone, a meaningful programme of national service for university students can be developed.

#### *Organization*

What type of an organization will be needed for the development of this programme and how shall the programme evolve? These are the two important questions that we will have to answer.

It may be desirable to visualize, in the first instance, the organization required at the grassroots level. We may, therefore, take the district as a unit. What is visualized here is that there will be a special officer in charge of this programme for the district as a whole, with the necessary subordinate staff to assist him in the discharge of his responsibilities. This officer, whose responsibilities will be largely organizational, may belong to the Education Department. But he will have to coordinate the resources of all government departments if the programme is to succeed.

Once this officer is in position, the next thing to decide upon is the centres where the programme will start. As has been stated above, the centre will have to be some educational institution—either a college or a secondary school or even a primary or middle school. Ultimately, all these institutions will have to be involved. But to begin with, the district officer will have to take a quick survey and select a few institutions where the necessary leadership and interest is available. He might begin with about fifty to a hundred centres in a district. These may be spread in all parts of the district or may be selectively located in a few community development blocks.

Once the centres are selected, the next step would be to survey the local needs as well as the available resources. The survey of needs will include contacting every young person in the age group 15-25 who is out of school and asking him whether he would like to continue his education and, if so, what his principal interests and convenient times are. The survey of available resources will include collecting full information about all the institutional and human resources available in the community that could be utilized, on a part-time basis, for a programme of this type. If the survey is properly carried out (and the personnel carrying out the survey could be quickly trained in a workshop of about ten to fifteen days), a picture of a programme for the locality will emerge. It will be the young persons who are interested in further education, the type of training they need, and also the local agencies that can be mobilized. It will then also be possible to work out the financial estimates. These will obviously vary from place to place and also depend considerably upon the type or programme to be evolved.

In planning the programmes, the key factors are elasticity and an earnest effort to get a 'fit' between the needs of the individual and the facilities provided for him. While in theory an attempt has to be made to meet, as

individually as possible, the needs of the different categories of youth, in practice it will generally mean that certain 'group needs' will be identified and met in groups.

The overall attempt should be to provide, for each out-of-school youth, a programme of part-time education for one to two hours a day, five days a week, which will be equivalent to full-time education for three months in a year. In addition, he should be required to spend at least two weeks in full-time residential instruction. To begin with, the idea should be to get every out-of-school youth under the programme for a period of one year at least. Many of the young persons who are thus exposed will want to continue their studies further on an optional basis, and they should be given every encouragement to do so. Ultimately the programme should be able to provide about three years of such part-time education to all in this age group.

Even in one year of part-time education, it is possible to include some upgrading of vocational skills, courses for functional literacy where necessary, some general education in citizenship, family life education, and some provision for recreational and cultural activities. But something very worthwhile could be achieved if a young person were to continue under the programme for about three years.

The programmes for boys are comparatively easier to organize and the resources available for them, especially in terms of personnel, are larger. In the beginning, therefore, the programme will be largely meant for boys. But the importance of education for the girls should not be underrated and special efforts should be made, right from the start to meet their needs.

While a beginning can thus be made with about fifty centres in a district, it should be possible to expand to about two hundred centres in three or four years, and the entire district can be intensively covered during the next decade.

We should begin with at least one district in every State and in at least one block in every Union Territory. The expansion will follow certain obvious lines. Every year, new districts or community development blocks may be added. In a district that has already been selected, new centres can be added; and in centres that are already established, attempts can be made to increase enrolments and to deepen and diversify the programmes. The target should be that at the end of the Fourth Plan we should bring under this programme about 10 per cent - nine million - of the total population of out-of-school youth. If funds do not permit, the target may be reduced by 50 per cent. At the end of the Fifth Plan, the attempt should be to cover about 50 to 60 per cent of the age group at least for a minimum period of one year. This will of course be continued, on a voluntary basis, for as long a period as practicable.

It may be an advantage to have an advisory committee at the district level consisting of the representatives of all agencies and departments that will cooperate therein.

If this basic structure at the district level is properly developed, coordination at other levels will not present any serious problem. At the State level, there will have to be a special officer of the status of a Joint or Additional Director of Education to look after the programme. There may be an

sadvantage in having a State-level coordination committee to assist him. At the Central level, we might have a similar coordinating committee of the ministries concerned, with a special officer in charge of the programme located in the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.

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## APPENDIX IV

Table I. Educational Institutions (1855-1973)

|                                                 | 1855-56   | 1901-02 | 1921-22 | 1946-47 | 1973-74<br>(Estimates) |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| 1. Universities                                 | ---       | 5       | 14      | 17      | 94                     |
| 2. Colleges of General Education                | 21        | 145     | 172     | 496     | 3,030                  |
| 3. Colleges of Professional and other Education | 13(a)     | 46      | 74      | 130     | 2,352                  |
| 4. Secondary Schools (General)                  | 281       | 1,170   | 1,248   | 5,297   | 40,127                 |
| 5. Secondary Schools : Vocational and Technical | ---       | 94      | 292     | 665     | 7,735(e)               |
| 6. Special and other Schools                    | 7(b)      | 990     | 3,729   | 4,746   | 15,000                 |
| 7. Middle Schools                               | (c)       | 4,323   | 6,739   | 11,162  | 97,356                 |
| 8. Primary Schools                              | 50,676(d) | 97,854  | 160,070 | 172,681 | 429,888                |
| Total (all educational institutions)            | 50,998    | 104,627 | 173,313 | 196,891 | 595,582                |

- (a) Includes schools also.
- (b) These were teacher training institutions.
- (c) Included under secondary/primary schools as the case may be.
- (d) Includes indigenous schools which were really outside the system.
- (e) Excludes adult education classes.

*Equality, Quality and Quantity in Indian Education*

|                                                                    | 1855-56    | 1901-02         | 1921-22           | 1946-47           | 1973-74<br>(Estimates) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. University Stage<br>(including pre-university and intermediate) |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| Total                                                              | 4,355(a)   | 23,007          | 58,837            | 237,546           | 4,102,211              |
| Girls                                                              | N.A.       | 264<br>(1)      | 1,529<br>(3)      | 23,207<br>(11)    | 898,558<br>(28)        |
| (No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled)                         |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| 2. Secondary Stage                                                 |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| Total                                                              | 33,801(b)  | 82,312          | 218,606           | 370,812           | 7,475,046              |
| Girls                                                              | N.A.       | 1,677<br>(2)    | 5,818<br>(3)      | 83,270<br>(11)    | 2,068,682<br>(38)      |
| (No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled)                         |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| 3. Middle Schools Stage                                            |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| Total                                                              | (c)        | 1,080,670       | 385,372           | 2,036,109         | 14,688,516             |
| Girls                                                              |            | 8,133<br>(5)    | 24,655<br>(7)     | 281,606<br>(16)   | 4,466,447<br>(44)      |
| (No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled)                         |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| 4. Primary Schools Stage                                           |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| Total                                                              | 885,624(d) | 3,564,122       | 6,404,200         | 14,105,418        | 63,193,358             |
| Girls                                                              |            | 380,282<br>(12) | 1,297,643<br>(25) | 3,728,793<br>(63) | 23,980,156<br>(61)     |
| (No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled)                         |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| 5. Total Enrollment of All Stages                                  |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
| Total                                                              | 923,780    | 3,886,493       | 7,207,308         | 17,750,263        | 91,059,133             |
| Girls                                                              | N.A.       | 393,168<br>(11) | 1,340,842<br>(23) | 4,156,742<br>(31) | 31,523,843<br>(53)     |
| (No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled)                         |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |

(a) Includes enrolment in professional schools as well.  
 (b) Includes some enrolment at the middle stage also.  
 (c) Included in secondary/primary stage  
 (d) Includes enrolment in indigenous schools which were really outside the system.

*Appendices***Table III.** Educational Expenditures (1855-1973)

(Rs. in thousands)

|                  | 1855-56 | 1901-02 | 1921-22 | 1946-47 | 1973-74<br>(Estimates) |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|
| Government Funds | N.A.    | 10,279  | 90,230  | 259,589 | 1,152,000              |
| Local Funds      | N.A.    | 7,425   | 24,731  | 84,021  | 96,000                 |
| Fees             | N.A.    | 12,688  | 38,009  | 152,222 | 240,000                |
| Other Sources    | N.A.    | 9,729   | 30,783  | 80,781  | 12,000                 |
| Total            | N.A.    | 40,121  | 183,753 | 576,613 | 1,600,000              |

**Table IV.** Literacy in India

| Year                                                                    | Literate | Illiterate | % of Literates |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------------|----------------|
| <i>* Literacy in all age groups (in crores)</i>                         |          |            |                |
| 1951                                                                    | 5.53     | 29.39      | 16.67          |
| 1961                                                                    | 10.58    | 33.34      | 24.03          |
| 1971                                                                    | 15.81    | 38.74      | 29.46          |
| <i>** Adult Literacy in the age group above 14 years (in crores)</i>    |          |            |                |
| 1951                                                                    | 4.15     | 17.39      | 19.26          |
| 1961                                                                    | 7.19     | 18.70      | 27.76          |
| 1971                                                                    | 10.58    | 21.17      | 33.32          |
| <i>** Adult Literacy in the age group above 15-34 years (in crores)</i> |          |            |                |
| 1951                                                                    | 2.54     | 8.97       | 22.09          |
| 1961                                                                    | 4.56     | 9.51       | 32.40          |
| 1971                                                                    | 6.90     | 9.82       | 41.27          |
| <i>* Literacy among young adults (15-24 Years)(in crores)</i>           |          |            |                |
| 1951                                                                    | 1.44     | 4.63       | 23.69          |
| 1961                                                                    | 2.63     | 4.69       | 35.97          |
| 1971                                                                    | 4.30     | 4.76       | 46.47          |
| <i>** Literacy among children (10-14 years) (in crores)</i>             |          |            |                |
| 1951                                                                    | 0.97     | 3.26       | 2.96           |
| 1961                                                                    | 2.08     | 2.85       | 42.26          |
| 1971                                                                    | 3.36     | 3.39       | 49.75          |

\* Absolute figures.

\*\* 1% sample survey by Registrar General.

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